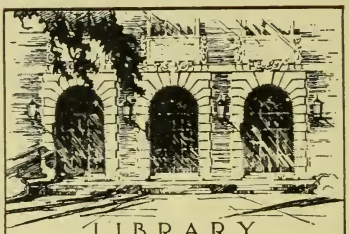

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THE

MASTER CRAFTSMAN

BY

WALTER BESANT

AUTHOR OF

'BEYOND THE DREAMS OF AVARICE,' 'ARMOREL OF LYONESSE,'
'ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN,' ETC.

SECOND EDITION

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1896

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THE MASTER CRAFTSMAN

PROLOGUE.

On a certain evening of July, in the year of grace 1804, old John Burnikel sat in his own chair—that with arms and a high back—his own chair in his own place during the summer—not his winter place—on the terrace outside the Long Room of the Red Lion Tavern. This old tavern, which, they say, was once visited by King Charles the First, when he hunted a deer across the Whitechapel meadows, and afterwards took a drink on the steps of this hostelry, was built of wood, like most of the houses on the River Wall. It had a tumble-down and rickety appearance; the upper windows projected, and were either aslant or askew; the gables stood out high above the red-tiled roof, which had sunk down in the middle, and for a hundred years had threatened to fall down; there were odds and ends of buildings pro-

jecting over the river, which also had looked for a hundred years as if they were falling into it; the place had never got as much painting as it should have; the half-obliterated sign hung creaking on rusty iron hinges. As it was in 1704, so it was in 1804, tottering, but never falling; ready to drop to pieces, but never actually dropping to pieces.

The red blinds in the window looked warm and comforting on a cold winter's night; and from many a ship homeward bound making its slow way up the river there were wafted signs of satisfaction that Wapping and the Red Lion Tavern and old John Burnikel could be seen once more.

The Long Room was on the first-floor, a room running right through the whole depth of the house, with one great window on the north, and another opening from floor to ceiling on the south. From the window on the north side could be seen in spring a lovely view of the trees and hedges of Love Lane and the broad orchards, all white and pink with blossoms of apple, pear and plum, which stretched away to the ponds and fields of Whitechapel, and to the tall buildings of the London Hospital.

The tavern, from that window, seemed to be some rural retreat far from the noisy town. In the winter, when the company was gathered round the roaring fire,

with shutters close, drawn blinds, and candles lit, there was no pleasanter place for the relaxation of the better sort, nor any place where one could look for older rum or neater brandy, not to speak of choice Hollands, which some prefer to rum. For summer enjoyment there was a broad balcony or terrace overhanging the river where the company might sit and enjoy the spectacle of the homeward-bound ships sailing up, and the outward-bound sailing down, and the loading and unloading, with lighters and barges innumerable, in midstream.

The tavern stood beside Execution Dock, and the company of drinkers might sometimes, if they pleased, witness a moving spectacle of justice done on the body of some poor sailor wretch—murderer, mutineer, or pirate—who was tied to a stake at low tide and was then left to expect slow Death; for the grim Finisher dragged cruel feet and lingered, while the tide slowly rose, and little by little washed over the chin of the patient and gently lapped over his lips, and so crept higher and higher till, with relentless advance, it flowed over his nostrils, and then, with starting eyes of agony and horror, the dying man was dead. Then the tide rose higher still, and presently flowed quite over his head, and left no sign of the dreadful Thing below.

There had been, however, no execution on this day. John Burnikel sat on the terrace, the time being eight

in the evening, before a table on which was a bowl of punch, his nightly drink. With him, one on each side, sat his two grand-nephews, first cousins, partners in the firm of Burnikel and Burnikel, boat-builders, of Wapping High Street—Robert and George Burnikel. The rest of the company consisted of certain reputable tradesmen of Wapping, and one or two sea-captains.

At this time John Burnikel was an extremely ancient person. His birth, in fact, as recorded in the register of St. John's Church, Wapping, took place in the year 1710. It was not everybody who knew that date, but everybody knew that he had far surpassed the limits accorded to man. Nobody in the parish, for instance, could remember any time when John Burnikel was not visible, and walking about, an old man as it seemed, in a time when, to this riverside people, greatly addicted as they were to rum, a man of fifty was accounted old. Nor could anybody remember the time when John Burnikel was not to be found every evening in the Long Room of the Red Lion, or on the terrace overlooking the river.

Old or not, he walked erect and briskly; he looked no more than sixty; his features were not withered or shrunken or sharpened; he had no look of decrepitude; he had preserved his teeth and his hair; the only sign of age was the network of wrinkles which time had

thrown over his face. And when he walked home at night he brandished his trusty club with so much resolution, and in his old arm there was still so much strength, that although the place was lawless, and robberies and assaults were common, and although he walked through the street every night alone, at ten o'clock, nobody ever molested him. Such is the virtue of a thick stick, which is far better than sword or pistol, if a man hath a reputation for readiness in its handling.

The old man lived in one of the small houses of Broad Street, in an old cottage with four rooms, with diamond panes in the window, and a descent of a foot or so from the street into the front-room. The house at the back looked out upon the open expanse of orchards and market-gardens, with a distant prospect of Whitechapel Mount. He lived quite alone, and he 'did' for himself, scrubbing his floors, personally conducting the weekly wash, and cooking his own food. This was simple, consisting almost entirely of beef-steaks, onions, and bread, with beer by the gallon. When he had cooked and served and eaten his breakfast or dinner, and when he had cleaned up his frying-pan and his plates, the old man would sit down in his arm-chair and go to sleep, in winter by the fire, in summer outside, in his back-yard. He had no books, and he

wanted none; he had no friends except at the tavern, and was cheerful without them. At the tavern, however, whither John Burnikel repaired at nightfall, or about six o'clock, every evening, he was friendly, hospitable, and full of talk, drinking, taking his tobacco, and conversing with the other frequenters of the house; and since he was generous, and often called for bowls of punch, grog around, and drams, so that many an honest fellow was enabled to go home drunk who would otherwise have gone home sober, he was allowed, and even encouraged, to talk and to tell his adventures over and over again as much as he pleased. To do him justice, he was always ready to take advantage of this license, and never tired of relating the perils he had encountered, the heroism he had displayed, and the romantic manner in which he had acquired his riches.

For the old man boasted continually of his great riches, and in moments of alcoholic uplifting he would declare that he could buy up the whole of the company present, and all Wapping to boot, if he chose, and be none the worse for it. These were vapourings; but a man who could afford to spend every day from five to ten shillings at the tavern, drinking the best and as much as he could hold of it, treating his friends, freely ordering bowls of punch, must needs possess means far beyond those of his companions. For the

village of Wapping, though there were in it many substantial boat-builders, rope-makers, block-makers, sail-makers, instrument-makers, and others connected with the trade and shipping of the Port of London, was not in those days a rich quarter.

The wealthy London merchants, who had houses at Mile End, Hoxton, Bow, Ham, and even Ratcliffe, never chose Wapping for a country residence; and, indeed, the riverside folk from St. Katherine's by the Tower as far as Shadwell were, as a whole, a rough, rude, and dishonest people, without knowledge, without morals, without principle, without religion. The mob, however, found not their way to the Long Room of the Red Lion Tavern.

The old man was always called John Burnikel; not Captain Burnikel, as was the common style and title of ancient mariners, nor Mr. Burnikel, as belonged to business men, but plain John Burnikel without any title at all. And so he had been called, I say, during the whole length of time remembered by the oldest inhabitants, except himself, of Wapping, and this was nearly seventy years.

It was a romantic history that the old man had to tell. He was the son of a boat-builder—a Wappineer—that was well known and certain; the business was still conducted by those two grand-nephews. At an early

age he had run away to sea; this was also perfectly credible, because all the lads of Wapping who possessed any generous instincts always did run away to sea, or became apprentices on board ship. No one doubted that John Burnikel was an old sailor. He said that he had risen to command an East Indiaman; this may have been true, but the statement wanted confirmation. His manner and habits spoke perhaps of the f'o'ksle rather than the quarter-deck, but, then, there are quarter-decks where the manners are those of the f'o'ksle. However, in the year 1804 nobody cared whether this part of his history was true or not, and at the present moment, ninety years after, it is of still less importance.

On the visit of a stranger, or on any holiday or on any festive occasion, John Burnikel was wont to relate at great length, and with many flourishes and with continually new embroideries, the series of adventures which enabled him to return to England at an early age—not more than five-and-twenty—the possessor of a handsome fortune. It would take too long to relate this history entirely in the old man's words. Besides, which history — told on which evening — should be selected? Suffice it to say that while it was in progress the company finished one bowl, ordered another, and sometimes finished that while the narrative proceeded. For listening without talking is thirsty work,

and a thirsty man must drink or die. And since the punch was paid for by the old man, 'twould be the neglecting of chances and opportunities not to take as much of it as the rest of the company allowed.

The substance of the earlier part of the story was this: John Burnikel was on board the East Indiaman, the *Hooghly*, bound from the Port of London to Calcutta. She had a goodly company of passengers, and was laden with a miscellaneous cargo. They fell into a hurricane in the Indian Ocean. The ship was dismasted, and lost her rudder and her boats; she drifted helpless for many days, and at last struck on a rock. When, after dangers and difficulties of the most extraordinary kind, John Burnikel found himself on shore at last, he was alone, naked, destitute and helpless on a hostile coast, the people of which he declared were notorious cannibals.

They did not, however, proceed to eat him; on the contrary, they clothed him, fed him, and presently took him up country as a present, presumably, to the kitchen of their King, 'or, as in their jargon they call him, gentlemen, their Rajah.'

Here he would break off to reflect upon the situation. Every storyteller loves to take advantage of the reflections suggested by a situation. 'Gentlemen,' he would say, ''tis a melancholy thing to find yourself growing

every day fatter and more ready for the spit; even the distinction of being reserved for the private larder of His Majesty could not make me cheerful. What, I ask you, is the idle honour of being served at the table of royalty when one thinks of what you must go through in order to get there? I would compare, gentlemen, in my own mind, that portion of me which might be on the Royal dish—a sirloin or a brisket or saddle—with a leg or a loin of roast pork on our own table; and I would remember that in order for us to get that toothsome loin the animal must first be stuck. 'Twas, I confess, mortifying to reflect that sticking must be undergone.

'Gentlemen, with the utmost joy I discovered that this Prince was too great and too high-minded to be a cannibal. Children of tender years, indeed, as we take sucking pig, he might welcome at his table, but not a sailor grown up and tough. He received me, on the other hand, with a gracious kindness which I cannot forget; he gave me an important office about his person —that of Hereditary Grand Mixer of the Royal Punch —a most responsible office, with a uniform of red silk, and a turban stuck all over with diamonds. This, gentlemen, is the Court uniform of that country. Here we know not what uniform means for splendour.'

The story at this point varied from day to day. Let us select the version most in use. He rendered some

signal service to His Majesty, the nature of which was differently told; in fact, it was impossible to reconcile the various narratives, for he discovered a conspiracy, revealed the conspirators at their work, and saved the King and the Dynasty; or he rescued the King's daughter from a fierce man-eating tiger; or he captured the kidnappers who were running off with that daughter; or he snatched the whole of the Harem from a consuming fire; or he healed them all of a dangerous sickness by administering tar-water. In fact, John Burnikel had a most lively imagination, and used it freely. Choose, therefore, the kind of service which you think most worthy of a great reward.

'For this service, gentlemen, the Great Mogul showed the gratitude of a Christian. He sent for me, and when I fell upon my knees, which is the only way in which His Majesty can be approached, he stepped down from his golden throne and bade me graciously to rise. Then he created me on the spot, a Duke, or a Lord Mayor—I forget which. This done, they gave me a splendid cloak to wear. And then—for the best was yet to come—the Emperor bade me prepare for something unexpected. Ah!'—here he drew a long breath—'unexpected indeed! With that he led me through the golden halls of his Palace, crowded with dancing girls, till we came to a place where there was a heavy

door. "Unlock it," says the King. So the door was opened, and we went down a few steps till we came to an underground hall. If you'll believe me, gentlemen, that hall hadn't need of candles to light it up. It was full of light; it dazzled one's eyes only to stand there and look around; full of its own light, for it was full of precious stones—heaps of 'em, boxes of 'em, shelves of 'em, strings of 'em; there they were—diamonds, rubies, pearls, emeralds, opals—every kind of precious stone that grows anywhere in the world. Gentlemen, there was a sight! The diamonds came from the Emperor's own diamond ground—Golconda they call it—where I've been. I will tell you some day about Golconda. The rubies were brought by the King's armies from Burmah. I've been to Burmah, and I'll tell you about the people there some day; cruel torturers they are. The pearls came from Ceylon, where they are got by diving. I've been a famous diver myself, and I'll tell you, if you ask me to-morrow, how I fought the shark under water; you don't know what a fight is like till you tackle a shark under water, with the conger and the cuttle and the codfish looking on! As for the emeralds, I don't rightly know how they got there. I have heard of a mountain in South America which is just one great emerald, and at certain times the natives go with hammers and chop off little bits.

I'll go out there next year to see it. However, gentlemen, there we were, the Great Mogul and me, standing in the middle of these treasures. "Jack," says he, "you shan't say that the King of India is ungrateful. For the service you have done me, I say—help yourself. Fill your pockets. Carry out all you can!" And I did. Gentlemen, it is seventy years ago and more, and still I could cry only to think that my pockets were not sacks. However, I did pretty well—pretty well; weigh me against any Lord Mayor of London you like, and you would say that I did very well. Better still, I brought these stones home with me. Best of all, I've got 'em still. When I want money I take one of my diamonds or a handful of pearls. Aha! You would like to know where I keep these jewels? Trust me; they are in safe keeping—all that's left of 'em—and that's plenty—in right, good, safe keeping.'

Was not this a splendid, a romantic story to be told in Whitechapel by a simple old sailor? Nobody believed it, which mattered nothing so long as the punch held out. Yet the old man most certainly did have money, as he showed by his nightly expenditure alone, let alone the fact that for seventy years he had lived among them all at Wapping, and had done no single stroke of work. Among his hearers there sat every night those two grand-nephews of his; they were cousins,

I have said, and partners in the boat-building business. They came, moved by natural affection—who would not love an uncle who might be telling the truth, or something like the truth, about these jewels? They also came to learn what the old man might reveal, which would be a clue to finding more; and they came out of jealousy, because each suspected the other of trying to supplant him in the favour of the uncle. They sat, therefore, and endured the story night after night, and endured the company, which was not always of their own rank and station as respectable tradesmen; but still they got nothing for their trouble, because the old man told them no more than he told the rest of the world. Nor did he show the least sign of affection for either. Every evening, when the cousins left the tavern, which was not until the old man had first departed, one would say to the other: 'Cousin George, our uncle ages; he ages visibly. I greatly fear that he is breaking.' And the other would reply: 'Cousin Robert, I greatly fear it, too. Yet it is the way of all flesh.' It was a time when every event had to be received in a spirit and with words proper to the occasion. 'We must resign ourselves to the impending blow.'

'Heaven grant'—the tribute to religion having been duly paid, they became natural again—'Heaven grant

that we find the truth about these jewels. The story cannot be true.'

'Yet how has he lived for seventy years in idleness?'

'I know not, nor can I so much as surmise.'

'Consider, cousin. He lays out from eight shillings to ten or even twelve shillings every evening at the Tavern. And there are his meals and his rent besides. Say that he spends twelve shillings a day, or eighty-four shillings a week, which is two hundred and eighteen pounds eight shillings a year. In seventy years this makes the prodigious sum of fifteen thousand two hundred and eighty-eight pounds. Where did he get all that money? Cousin, he has either a secret hoard somewhere, or he has property—houses, perhaps, of which we know nothing.'

'When he dies I suppose we shall learn. A man cannot have his property buried with him.'

Now, on this night, as the company at the Tavern parted at ten o'clock, instead of shouldering his club and marching off, the old sailor turned to his nephews. 'Boys,' he said—he had never called them 'boys' before —'I have something to say. I had better say it at once, because, look you, I think I am getting old, and in a few score years, more or less, it may be too late to say it. Come with me, then, to my poor house in Broad Street.'

The nephews, greatly astonished and marvelling much, followed him. They were going to be told something. What? The truth about the jewels? The nature of the property?

The old man led the way, brandishing his stick, stout and erect. He took them to his house, opened the door, closed it and barred it; got his tinder-box, and obtained a light for a thick ship's tallow candle. Then he barred the window-shutter. His nephews looked round the room. It was the first time they had stood within those walls. There was a table; there was an arm-chair, a high arm-chair in which one could sit protected from the draughts by the fireside; there was a tobacco-box, with two or three churchwarden pipes; there was a cupboard with plates. A kettle was on one side of the hob, and a gridiron on the other. There was no other furniture in the room. But the door and the window-shutters were both of oak, thick and massive. And on the wall were hung a cutlass and a brace of pistols.

'Wait here a bit,' said the old man. He took the candle and carried it into the other room, leaving them in the dark. After a few minutes he returned, bearing a small canvas sack.

'Nephews,' he said, laying the bag on the table, and keeping both hands upon it, 'you come every night to the Red Lion in hopes of finding out something

about my property. It is your inheritance; why shouldn't you come? Sometimes you think it is much, then your spirits rise. Sometimes you think it is little, then your spirits sink. When I begin to talk you prick up your ears; but you never hear anything. Then you go home and you wonder how long the old man will last, eh? and how much money he has got, eh? and what he will do with it, eh? Well, now, you shall have your curiosity satisfied.'

'Sir,' said one of the nephews, 'our spirits may well sink at the thought of your falling into poverty.'

'And,' said the other, 'they may well be expected to rise at the thought of your prosperity.'

'I have told you many stories of travel and of profit. Sometimes you believe, in which case you show signs of satisfaction. Sometimes you look glum when you think that you are wasting your evenings.'

'Oh, sir,' said one of the nephews, 'sure one cannot waste one's time in such good and improving company as yourself.'

'We come,' said the other, 'for instruction. Your talk is more instructive than any book of travel.'

'The time has now arrived'—the old man paid no attention to these fond assurances—'to tell you what I have, and to show you what you will have. I am now grown old, so old that I must expect before

many years are over'—he was already, as you have seen, ninety-four—'to die'—he sighed heavily—'and to give my substance to those who come after. Look you! I bear no manner of affection to you. When a man gets to ninety, he cares no longer about anything but himself. That is the beauty and excellence of being old. Then a man gets everything for himself, no sharing, no giving. I shall give you nothing—not even if you are bankrupt—in my lifetime. But I mean not to defraud my heirs. You shall see, therefore, all I have got. Many a rich merchant living in his great house would be glad to change places with you when I am gone—many a merchant? All the merchants of London Town!'

He took up the bag. It was a long narrow bag of brown canvas, quite two feet long, and shaped like a purse of the period.

I know not what they expected, but at the sight of the treasure which he poured out upon the table these two respectable boat-builders gasped; they looked on with amazement unspeakable, with open mouths, with starting eyes, with flaming cheeks, with quivering hands and trembling knees. They could not look at each other; they dared not speak. It was like the opening of the gates of Paradise, with a full view of the interior arrangements.

They had never dreamed of such a sight. Five hundred pounds all in gold would have seemed to these worthy tradesmen a treasure, five thousand pounds great wealth, ten thousand pounds an inexhaustible sum, for this old man poured out upon the table a pile, not of guineas, but of precious stones. Why, then, his stories about the countless treasures of the Great Mogul must be true. There they were—diamonds, emeralds, rubies, pearls, all the stones which he described, hundreds of them, thousands of them ; there were precious stones, large, splendid, worth immense sums, with smaller ones, with strings of pearls, enough to fill quart pots. And now they understood what was meant by all those stories concerning precious stones over which they had grown as incredulous as Didymus.

The old man bent over his heap and ran his fingers into it, and caught a handful and dropped it back again. 'See my beauties!' he cried. 'Look at the colours ; the sunshine in them and the green and the red. Saw you ever the like? Oh, if a man could but live long enough to work through this heap! Why, 'tis seventy years since I first came home, with this bag in my hand for all my fortune, and there's no difference in it yet. It grows no less ; I sometimes think it grows bigger. No man, live as long as he could wish, would work through this heap.'

'May we humbly ask, sir,' said one of them, taking heart, 'how much money is represented by this bag of jewels?'

'I know not. Take this stone; 'tis a ruby. Look at it, weigh it; I sold one like it three months ago for fifty pounds. There are hundreds bigger. Well'—he began to put the stones back into the bag—'I have shown these treasures to you because the time will come—not yet, I hope—it must come, I suppose'—he spoke as if there was still a chance of an exception being made in his favour—'when I must give the bag to you two and go away. I shall have to go aboard a strange ship and join a strange company, as bo's'n, maybe, or able seaman, or cook—who knows?—and sail away in strange waters on a new cruise where there are no charts.'

'Not for many years,' murmured one of the nephews fervently.

'Not if our prayers, our daily prayers, can keep you here!' added the other, clasping his hands.

'Thank ye,' said John Burnikel, tying up his bag.

'I trust, sir,' said one of the nephews, 'that you keep this precious treasure in a safe place. A whisper, a suspicion, would fly through Wapping like wild-fire, and you would be robbed and murdered.'

'Devil a whisper will there be,' said John. 'You

won't start a whisper, that's certain. And I won't. And as for the place where I keep it, no one will see me put it there, and no one would think of looking there. And now, nephews, good-night. Say nothing—but of course you will not—and be as patient as you can. I believe you will have to wait a dozen years or so before you get the bag.'

They stepped out into the street, and heard him, to their satisfaction, bolting and barring the door behind them.

'Cousin,' said one, 'this has been a wonderful evening. Who could have believed it? We are now rich men—oh, rich beyond our dreams! We can leave Wapping, and court the society of the Great.'

'Unless his bag is stolen, which may happen. I tremble only to think of keeping such a treasure in such a mean little cottage among all these rogues and villains! It ought to be in a strong room such as merchants use.'

'I think—I fear—we shall not have to wait long. Methinks the old man's voice is breaking. He seemed feebler to-night than I remember to have seen him. Ninety-four is a great, a very great, age.'

'Ah! he may not have many weeks—many days—to live. His voice, I also observed, was weak. It is a happiness, cousin, to reflect that an uncle who now

entertains a disposition of so much justice towards his nephews, can hardly fail of Abraham's bosom.'

This anxiety proved prophetic. Exactly a week afterwards John Burnikel did not appear at the tavern at six o'clock, nor at half-past six. The nephews hurried round to Broad Street. The door was open; there was no one in the front room. In the room behind they found their uncle lying on his bed, his face drawn as with pain, and with the gray look which often falls upon those who are about to die.

'Ah,' he said, 'I thought you wouldn't be long. Come in, boys. Shut the door and come in. I've had a kind of fit; my legs don't seem right. Get me a drink; the barrel of beer is in the other room. I shall be better to-morrow—much better.' He drank a copious draught of beer, which refreshed him. He tried to sit up, but could not. It was a day in August, when it gets dusk about eight. At nightfall they found the tinder-box and got a light, and sat down one on each side of the bed.

So they sat all night till three in the morning without saying a word to each other. The old man seemed sleeping. At daybreak he began to murmur, rambling in his speech.

'The man's mad. He won't know; he won't find out. He will die mad. No one will know—no one will

know. Boys'—he opened his eyes—'you both know where the bag is hidden away. I think this is the end. Well, I've left you rich—half as rich, each of you, as myself.' He closed his eyes. Presently one of the watchers bent over him.

'Cousin,' he said, 'the breath has gone out of the body. Our excellent, wealthy uncle is no more. Nothing remains but to weep for him.'

'Let us find the bag and divide the property,' said the other, 'before we call in the neighbours.'

'It is our sorrowful duty to do so, as his heirs, and quickly, before the thing gets wind."

It was the custom to construct at the head of the great wooden bed of the period a secret box, drawer, or repository. Everybody knew the secret place at the head of the bed. It was an open secret, yet it was commonly used in every house for the concealment, as in a place of perfect safety, of the silver and the valuables.

They searched in this receptacle. The bag was not there.

'It is in this room, because he brought it out of this room. Let us look again.'

Again they searched every corner and cranny for the secret hiding-place. It was not there. There might be some other hiding-place in the bed. It could only

be at the head. They tapped and hammered. In vain. Was it on the head of the bed? They climbed up and looked. No; it was not there. Was it under the bed? They looked, but it was not there. Could it be in the mattress? in the feather bed? in the bolster? under the bolster? under the mattress? They lifted the dead man on to the floor, and they examined these places and other constituent portions of the bed. In vain. They lifted their great-uncle back again to the bed, and gazed at each other with anxious eyes.

'It must be in this room,' they repeated. 'He brought it from this room; he took it back.'

They looked round. There was a three-legged stool leaning against the wall, because one of its legs was broken off. There was a sea-chest in the corner—a big, heavy box with a lock, and bound strongly with iron. Ah! the sea-chest. They dragged it out and threw open the lid. Within was a curious collection of miscellaneous property: a big silver watch, a knife, a dirk, an ugly Malay creese, an old pistol, a bo's'n's whistle, a mariner's compass, a bundle of charts, a few trifles in carved wood from India, two or three broken figures from India, a dead flying-fish, together with a bundle of decayed or decaying clothes, which filled up the bottom of the chest. They pulled everything out with eager haste, each man looking jealously at the

other for fear he should secretly convey the bag into his own pockets. Everything lay on the floor, and the bag was not in the chest. It was divided into two compartments, a larger and a smaller. They held it up to the light. No, there was nothing in the chest. They looked again about the room. There was a cupboard in the wall. Both discovered it at the same moment and rushed at it. They threw open the door. It was a spacious cupboard; but there was nothing in it at all. Old John Burnikel had never used that cupboard.

'Let us lift the hearthstone,' said one of them. Everybody knows that the hearthstone was often the family bank where money was stowed away for safety when there was no secret hiding-place at the head of the bed. And the family continued to put faith in the hearthstone long after the secret was perfectly well known to those persons who break in and steal.

They did lift the hearthstone. Nothing was under it. The earth had never been disturbed since the stone was laid.

Their faces were now haggard. Could the bag be stolen?

They then prized up the boards of the floor; they tore down the wainscoting; they searched the little back-yard for signs of recent disturbance; they re-

membered that there were two rooms upstairs; they were empty and unfurnished, but they tore up the boards; they searched in the roof; they searched in the chimneys. Heavens! there was no sign of the bag anywhere. Where was it?—where was it? All that day they searched. The next day—which was indecent in haste—they buried the old man, neither of them attending the funeral for fear of the bag being found in their absence. And then they began again. They wrecked the house; they reduced it to its bare walls of brick; they pulled the bed to pieces; they left, as they thought, nothing unturned. But the bag was not in the house.

Then they began to think that, while the old man lay unconscious, the door open, the bag might have been stolen. But it must have been hidden away, and nobody knew that it was there, or had thought of it——

Then another suspicion entered the heads of both at the same moment. One of them, when it had taken shape with the firm outline of moral certainty, put it into words:

'His last words, George—his dying words—were: "You know where I've put the bag"; and he looked at you—at you. What did he look at you for? Because you know where he put the bag.'

'He looked at you, Robert, not at me. Why?

Because he had told you where it was. You wormed his secret out of him.'

'And now you try to turn it off on me. You've taken the bag; you've got it somewhere; you think to take it all for yourself.'

'This impudence passes everything. Do you think I am simple enough not to see through this villainy? 'Tis you—you—you who have taken the bag.'

It is sad to relate that these recriminations became more and more bitter; that the two boat-builders of Wapping—churchwardens, jurymen, most respectable and responsible persons, partners and cousins—did, in the agony of their disappointment, call each other rogue, thief, villain; that they proceeded, being beyond and beside themselves with bitterness, to shake their fists at each other; that they next—it was a fighting age—fell upon and mauled each other; that they only desisted when exhaustion, not satisfaction, compelled them to separate; and that they parted with threats, curses, and promises of Newgate Gaol and the Condemned Cell.

To conclude, the bag could not be found. The agonies endured by those two disappointed men were terrible. To have these treasures just shown to them, dangled before them, and then withdrawn! Heard one ever the like? To conclude, they dissolved partnership. One of them left Wapping altogether, to enjoy at a

distance, the other said, his ill-gotten wealth; the other remained to conceal, the first said, the fact of his stolen property. And as for the few remaining goods of John Burnikel—the table, the bed, and the household gear—they were conveyed to the boat-builder's house, and after one more final search the old man's cottage in Broad Street was abandoned.

But the cousins were wrong. Neither of them had the bag, and it remained undiscovered. You shall see how, in the course of this history, it came to be discovered.

CHAPTER I.

'MARRY MONEY.'

'YES, Sir George,' said the lawyer, looking mighty serious. 'We have at length ascertained how you stand. Your father conducted—misconducted—his affairs without consulting us—and we knew nothing of what was going on—nothing at all.'

I inclined my head. I had already heard certain things which had led me to expect something unpleasant. Now I was to learn the whole truth.

My father, the second Baronet, and son of the well-known judge and lawyer, had died five weeks or so before this interview. He died at the age of fifty-two, having led a perfectly quiet and apparently harmless life. Harmless! You shall see. I was twenty-five, and after the usual run of Eton and Cambridge, I had my chambers in Piccadilly, and my club, and led the life customary among young men of fortune. I knew nothing, and learned nothing, and could do nothing,

except play with a lathe. I was not bookish, or artistic, or scientific, or musical, or literary, or anything. Therefore the intelligence that I was about to receive was even more delightful than it would have been to a man who could do things, write things, and sell things.

'You know already,' the lawyer continued, 'that your father met with serious losses on the Stock Exchange?'

'I know so much, certainly.'

'I have here everything ready for you. Before you look at it, Sir George, be prepared for a very—a most painful surprise.'

'Tell me all—at once.'

'Then, Sir George—it is a most distressing communication to make—but you are young, which is the only consolation—young and strong—and, I doubt not, a philosopher——'

'I am especially and above all things a philosopher. But pray get on.'

'Your grandfather, with his magnificent, his unequalled practice, and the habits of prudence which guided all his investments, rolled up what we call, in the profession, a colossal fortune—not colossal in the City sense, but in our sense. It was over a quarter of a million, which your father, then forty years of age, inherited. When he died, five weeks ago, at the age of fifty-two, he had managed by those speculations of his

to get through the whole of it—the whole of it—with his country house and his town house. Ah! Sir George, why—why—why did not the Judge entail the whole? It maddens me only to think of it! He has lost all—everything.' The lawyer rubbed it in with resolution. 'You have no longer any fortune left; you have no house; my poor young friend, you have nothing but a few scraps and crumbs left of that splendid fortune that seemed to be yours two months ago.'

'Lost the whole of the fortune? In ten years? He could not.'

'Everything is possible on the Stock Exchange. He has lost it all.'

'You mean that I have nothing. Say it again.'

'Your father, in ten years, lost the whole of his fortune. You have got left, practically, nothing.'

'Thank you. I have got nothing. I shall realize it presently. It makes one feel chilly. I have got nothing.' I put my fingers in my waistcoat pocket. 'Here are some coins. They are mine, I suppose. There are two or three hundred pounds standing to my account at the Bank; are they mine, too?'

'Yes. And to speak of crumbs and scraps, I think I may save a little something for you out of the wreck. But it will be a mere trifle. I estimate it at the most as three thousand pounds.'

'Oh! I have three thousand pounds. You are quite sure you have done your very worst?'

'I can do nothing worse than this for you.'

I got up and stood over the empty fireplace. 'I suppose,' I said slowly, 'that it is very bad. I am not a person of imagination, you know, and I cannot feel, all at once, how bad it is. A thing like this cannot be appreciated all at once. It takes time—it has to get into the system.'

'There is, at all events, something—a solid something, though small,' said the lawyer, watching me with some curiosity to see how I took it.

'Yes, a kind of nugget. It promises to become exciting. I shall become the penniless adventurer of fiction. Should I, do you think, begin to practise billiards? Or does écarté offer a better opening?'

'You must consider, Sir George, when you come to take this business seriously, that many a man with less than that has got on in the world, and made a name for himself, and even amassed a fortune. Your grandfather certainly began with less.'

'The men who get on in the world are the men who start with twopence. Reduce me to twopence, with an introduction to the Lord Mayor, and no doubt I shall get on.'

'Nonsense. Take the thing seriously: think over

what can be done with three thousand pounds. It is quite enough, with prudence, to keep you while you are qualifying for a profession, and to start you afterwards —law, medicine, the church, which will you have? Or there are the new-fangled professions which used to be trades—science, art, engineering, architecture: you may take up any one of these and qualify for practice with three thousand pounds. Or you might start a horse or cattle farm—there is an opening they tell me, and the rent of land in some places is very low. Or you might buy a partnership in a house of business—three thousand pounds would go a long way in many houses. There are a hundred ways in which a prudent man might invest that sum of money. I assure you, Sir George, that there are thousands of young fellows, as well educated as yourself, who, if they had three thousand pounds to begin with, would feel that all the wealth of Lombard Street was well within their reach. And they'd manage to get a good slice of it, too.'

'Very likely. I don't feel that way at all myself. I am quite certain that, whatever I did, I should get none of the wealth of Lombard Street.'

'I am only pointing out the possibilities of things.'

'You see, I am not that kind of young man at all. And that is not the kind of life that I desire. Money-making—I suppose it is natural to one whose money has

been made for him—seems an ignoble pursuit, at the best.'

'Well—well, but permit me, you haven't yet got the true feeling of your poverty. You don't quite understand yet what it means—the difference it makes. When it really gets into your blood and your bones, and you see rising up walls between you and the old world of enjoyment, with prohibitions, and exclusions, and limitations, then, my dear young friend, you will feel stimulated to make an effort in a way that as yet you cannot understand. How should you understand all these evils in a moment? Let me tell you, Sir George, poverty is a terrible thing—a terrible thing. It deprives a young man like you of the chief pleasures of his age; it denies a middle-aged man what most he desires at that time of life, consideration and authority; and it robs an old man of those comforts and attentions and cares which alone can solace his infirmities. I have been poor myself, Sir George, and I speak with full and bitter knowledge. Never say that money-making is ignoble; the methods may be ignoble, but the pursuit is natural, laudable, honourable. Money, my friend, is the only thing—the only thing—that makes life tolerable. Without it there can be no happiness, no independence, no authority, no self-respect. Get money somehow.' The old man spoke with sincerity and con-

viction. Of course, he was quite right. Yet, as I afterwards reflected, in the possession of money there are degrees. Many an old man with two hundred a year is as happy as another old man with ten thousand a year. Yet some money must be made. Wherefore let every man calculate what he wants for comfort, and money-make up to that standard, and no more.

'Well,' I said, 'I will think it over. At this moment you cannot expect me to have any coherent ideas on the subject. I really do think, however, that there is no one in the world less able to make money than myself.'

'Wait—be patient—and consider what things mean. Heavens! If we could only make young men understand.'

'Well,' I took up my hat. 'If you have really done your worst——'

'Don't go just yet, Sir George. I have one or two things still to say.' The solicitor, whose face generally had more of keenness than of benevolence in it, leaned back and assumed an unwonted expression with more benevolence in it than keenness. 'I confess I was somewhat nervous about this job. To tell a young man that he has no fortune left—a young man who seemed to inherit so enormous a fortune—was rather a formidable task. I congratulate you, Sir George, on your pluck.

You take it very well. You might have fallen into a rage, and filled the room with reproaches of your dead father.'

'Since he was my father and is dead, that would be impossible.'

'Quite so. Yet nobody can deny that he has done you a most grievous injury. You bear this calamity, I say, with a fortitude which is astonishing. Let us return to what you might do; you are young, you are well-bred, you are good-looking, you have pleasant manners, you are——'

He lifted his eyebrows into a note of interrogation.

'Clever? No. Nor bookish. Nor scientific. Nor inclined to any of the professions. And ignorant to the last degree.'

'Dear! dear! What a thousand pities this misfortune did not happen twenty years ago! Then you would have been trained to something. Whereas now——' He considered a little. 'Let us think of a few other things. Journalism?'

'I told you, I am not clever.'

'Pity. Journalism requires no capital and no training. I would not recommend the stage.'

'I cannot act.'

'There is one thing we have forgotten, Sir George. You are a young man of good family; you have, there-

fore, family influence. You must set that to work for you. People think that everything nowadays goes by competitive examination. Ho! ho! The world is kept in the dark entirely for the sake of young men like you. There are quantities of lucky people—commissioners, secretaries, people about the Court, people everywhere—who get in by family influence, and get on by family influence. There are colonial appointments, some of them very good indeed, if you don't mind going abroad. Or you might begin as a private secretary to a rising man. Why, there was a private secretary once who became a peer. The best thing you can do is to go to your own people.'

'Unfortunately it is no use. I haven't got any people. My mother was the daughter of a simple country clergyman, and her relations are all middle-class professional folk. My grandfather married as soon as he began to get on at the Bar—his wife belonged strictly to the middle-class. The Judge's father was a West End builder—originally an East End boat-builder. I remember that because there is a romance in the family about an old sailor and a bag of diamonds. My great-grandfather's cousin and partner secretly stole that bag of diamonds. That caused a dissolution of partnership and destruction of cousinly affection. The real reason why my grandfather was sent to the Bar

was because the old man thought that if there was a lawyer in the family his cousin might be prosecuted, and so his share of those jewels might be recovered. But the prosecution never came off.'

'Odd story. I wonder how much truth there is in it.'

'Not much, I dare say. But the point is that we are quite a bourgeois lot, and that I do not possess in reality, though I have got this trifling handle to my name, either family, friends or influence.'

'But you do possess your title. And believe me, Sir George, if you are careful you may find that it is a very valuable possession indeed. By means of your title you may once more join the wealthy classes. Thousands of women, rich women, daughters of wealthy men, would give anything for a title. Find out where these women are—in York, in Bath, in Birmingham, in Liverpool, in Manchester, here in London. Get introductions, and you will find your path smoother for you.'

'Marry money?' I shuddered.

'Do not misunderstand me. You are not expected to marry an old woman, or an ugly woman. There are as many nice girls and pretty girls who have money as there are old women. Marry money, young man. Marry money. It is the easiest thing in the world for you to do. And, I am quite sure, quite the most pleasant. As for love, it is all imagination. And,

besides, why shouldn't you love a rich girl as well as a poor girl?'

'No. Not to be thought of.'

'Well, if you won't marry money, there is the City. A baronet's name still, even after the many rude shocks of these latter years, looks well on a board of directors. You would find it quite easy to get put on the Direction somewhere or other. The qualification is not a great deal. What do you think of that?'

'Why—as I know nothing whatever of business, it would be a kind of fraud on the shareholders. I should undertake duties of which I know nothing.'

'Generally the interests of the shareholders in the appointment of directors is the very last thing the promoters consider. They want the shares taken up.'

'Then it would be still more a fraud upon the shareholders. That way won't do.'

'Sir George, I fear I cannot help you. These are the existing ways of making money. Choose. If you will have none of them, then we come back to the easiest way—marry money—and if you refuse that——' He spread his hands, meaning, 'then you must starve.'

I walked away thoughtfully. About the fortitude and the pluck I say nothing. One must not, in these days, sit down and cry. At the same time, it was with a very heavy heart that I mounted to my chambers—

Plantagenet Mansions, eighth floor, about half-way up.

'Marry money, marry money,' said the solicitor.

The words kept ringing in my ears like the tolling of a bell.

For, you see, in order to marry money I had no occasion to go to New York or to Bath or Manchester or Birmingham. The money was actually waiting for me with the marriage. I had only to reach out my hand and take it, and with the money, the owner of it. And not an old woman, at all; nor an ugly woman; nor a woman maimed or halt in mind or in body; a woman, eminently desirable, beautiful, wealthy, well-born, and of sweet disposition. Attached to the marriage there would be certain conditions, but such as most men would consider quite light, easy, and tolerable conditions.

'Marry money—marry money—marry money.' The words rang in my ears like the ringing of a bell.

So the first effect of the wreck and ruin of my fortune was a great and strong temptation, a voice urging me to reach out my hand and take this fortune which lay ready waiting for me.

'Marry money! Marry money!' said the man of large experience and of many years.

I turned mechanically into the room called my study.

It was really my workroom. It was fitted with a lathe and with a bench. On the wall were hundreds of tools, bright and glittering. There was a shelf of books, technical books about carpentering, wood-carving, cabinet-making, fretwork, iron-work, and the like; there were 'blocks' ready for use; there were boxes and other things, finished and unfinished, chased, rounded, polished. The lathe represented my one talent.

I looked at the machine thoughtfully. 'If I could only make money out of you. And now, I am very much afraid, I shall have to sell you for what you will fetch—tools and block and all. Pity! Pity!' I laid a loving hand upon the bright and delicate machinery. I wish it had sighed, or groaned, or done anything by way of sympathetic response. But it did not. Even in romance machinery is not responsive.

'Marry money,' whispered the voice.

Was there no way by which I could earn a livelihood? You, who have been carefully taught from childhood that you have your own way to make in the world; who have served an apprenticeship; who have learned the mystery of a craft; who have learned the way of work, the ordinary groove; who have become keen; who have lived in City houses, where they think of nothing but business—suppose you were thrown into the world at five-and-twenty, with no special know-

ledge whatever. Do you think you would sink or swim?

'Marry money,' said the solicitor. 'Marry money.'

On the walls hung the portraits of ancestors. I had three, which is one more than most of us can boast. Yet it is not exactly a long line of ancestry. The portrait of my father hung in the middle—to the living, reigning Prince belongs the place of honour. It showed a man of neat and even sleek appearance, clean-shaven, gray-headed, with mild eyes; a man of no marked character, one would think. The shallow observer would set him down as a man who could do no harm. Quite wrong. There is no one so mild and meek that he cannot do harm. 'To think,' said his son, addressing the portrait, 'that you have done this mischief—you! Why did not the painter give you eager, starting eyes, and trembling lips, and a flushed cheek? Lying painter!' But to reproach a portrait is next door to reproaching the person it represents. I turned to the next picture, that of my grandfather, the Judge, in wig and robes, looking very much like Rhadamanthus.

'All your money is gone, my lord. Do you understand? All the money that you scraped together. It is gone—lost—wasted—thrown away. You have doubtless met your son by this time. Perhaps he has explained things. Don't be hard on him.'

On the other side hung the portrait of the builder. 'What do you say?' I asked. 'How do you like the fall of the family fortunes? Perhaps you can advise something practical.'

'Marry money! Marry money.' Was it the voice of the builder?

Portraits seldom respond. Spiritualists should look to it. There would be no need of incarnating a spirit if you could make him speak out of his own portrait. I turned away from these silent, unsympathetic effigies and began mechanically to turn the lathe. But my mind was not with the work; I laid down the block, and sat down. Again the solicitor seemed to be addressing me.

'Marry money—marry money.'

I saw letters lying on the table, and tore open the first, the one whose handwriting I knew. It was a woman's.

'DEAR GEORGE' (I read),

'I am anxious to learn the result of your talk with the lawyers, and what you have really lost. Come and see me as soon as you get back.

'Yours,

'FRANCES.'

I left the other two letters unread.

'Marry money—marry money,' said the solicitor.

I opened a drawer, and took out a dainty case of red velvet bound with gold. It contained a single photograph. It was the portrait of a girl, and showed a very striking face—the face of a queen or a princess. Her name was surely Imperia, certainly a *grande dame de par le monde*. A most regal face; the brow and cheek ample; the eyes large and steady; the features clear and regular; the lips firm; the chin rounded; everything about this woman large, including her mind; a woman whom the common herd would fear, though they might reverence her. It would require either a brave man or a presumptuous man to make love to her. Her eyes looked out of the picture with a kindly light.

'There is no woman like Frances,' I thought. 'And yet——'

When one has been brought up from childhood side by side with a girl, seeing her every day, a girl a little older than one's self, and a great deal cleverer, the affection which one feels for that girl partakes of the brotherly emotion. Therefore I said, 'And yet——'

'Marry money—marry money,' this importunate solicitor continued.

Yesterday, perhaps—I don't know—it was possible; to-day, no. My father, when he threw away my money,

threw away that possibility. Frances vanished from my grasp gradually—in wild-cat mines, in gold reefs, in Central African railways, in Central American bonds.

Again, like a song of rest and happiness, came the temptation:

'Marry money—marry money.'

'She is a beautiful woman,' continued the Tempter; 'she loves you, after a fashion. You love her, after a fashion. You know each other. She is so rich that she will not care about the loss of your fortune. It is all nonsense about brother and sister. Marry her—marry the Lady Frances, who is waiting for you.'

I let these voices go on for half an hour or so. It was rather amusing, I remember, to feel one's self tempted; but, of course, one had to stop it some time. So I put down my foot, and said resolutely: 'No.' Upon which the two voices became silent, and spoke no more.

CHAPTER II.

'TRY POLITICS.'

'Now, George, what have you got to tell me?'

Lady Frances, daughter of the famous Earl of Clovelly, once, twice, three times Premier, and of the even more illustrious Countess, the last of our great political ladies, was also the young widow of that distinguished statesman, old Sir Chantrey Bohun, who died in harness as Secretary of State for India. She was a year older than myself, a difference which, when we were children together, and next-door country neighbours, gave her a certain superiority over me. She married, for political reasons, at the age of eighteen; her friends were all political friends. It was generally understood that, after a decent interval of two or three years' widowhood, she would marry a second time, and play over again the *rôle* so admirably enacted by her mother. For the moment she closed her town-house, and when she was not in the country lived quietly in a flat, seeing few people.

She was sitting beside the window, into which poured a flood of vaporous sunshine from the west, for it was a day in early April, when the sun sets about seven. The warm, soft light wrapped her as in a cloud, under which her lace was soft and luminous. Truly, a most lovely woman, but to me not a woman who inspired love. These brotherly affections sometimes interfere with things that might have been.

'Sit down, George, and tell me exactly all about it.'

'I would rather stand. Well, to begin: I told you, Frances, about that astounding father of mine—how he secretly gambled and speculated and lost money on the Stock Exchange.'

'Yes; you told me, and it was the most amazing thing that I ever heard. Your father, of all men! The quietest man in the world—meek, even, if one may suggest such a quality in a man. Yes, decidedly meek. Whenever I hear of meekness my thoughts will now turn to your father rather than to Moses. And yet a speculator!'

'It is, as you say, the most amazing thing. However, one would not have minded this curious discrepancy between appearance and reality if he had only lost a few thousands. He had a quarter of a million to go upon —a few thousands might have been allowed him. But, Frances, he has lost everything—actually every penny.'

'Every penny, George?'

'Every penny. He began, I say, with a fortune of nearly a quarter of a million when he was forty, and when he died the other day at fifty he had nothing—nothing at all. Had he lived six months longer he would have been a bankrupt. He has lost everything. The way of it is all shown in a bundle of papers. Perhaps some day I shall be curious enough to read them.'

'Oh, George! nothing left? Why, it is impossible!'

'Unfortunately, it is quite possible. I am a pauper, Frances, except for a few scraps and crumbs.'

'My poor George!' Frances held out both her hands. 'I am so sorry—so very sorry. But people like us don't become absolute paupers. There is always a something left after the most terrible catastrophe. You spoke of scraps and crumbs.'

'The fragments that remain amount to about three thousand pounds, I understand—an income of ninety pounds a year. That is what I meant by the scraps and crumbs.'

'It does not seem much, does it? But, then, money is the most elastic thing in the world. My sovereigns are all sixpences. I know some people whose sixpences are all sovereigns. Of course, you have not begun to make any plans for the future?'

'Not yet.'

'Now, George, it is the strangest thing—you will never believe it; I have no fancy for ghostliness—but yesterday evening I certainly had a presentiment. I was sitting alone, and the thought suddenly flashed across my brain: Suppose that George, by any accident, was to find himself without any money at all! And, behold, you come this morning and tell me that your fortune is gone!'

'A strange presentiment, Frances!'

'Then I thought it over. I could not arrive at any conclusion, because, you see, there is always the uncertainty of what a man will do. With a woman it would be easy. The problem divided itself into three questions: What effect would poverty produce on George? How would George bear it? and, What would George do with poverty? I could find no satisfactory answer to any of these questions. And now you will actually answer them yourself.'

'As for the first question, I don't know what the effect will be—I may become a sandwich-man. We shall see. As for the second, I mean to bear it as philosophically as I can. For the moment that is tolerably easy. The important question, however, is, "How will he bear it in a twelvemonth or so, when the pressure is really felt?"'

'No, that is part of the third question "What will

he do with his poverty?" You see, George, poverty is a possession, just like wealth. It has its responsibilities and its duties. In a better world than this we should have the nobler spirits all working their hardest, and striving with each other to assume poverty, even with its responsibilities. Benedict and Bernard and Francis of Assisi all understood what poverty might mean, and the question is, What will you do with it, George?'

'It is only an hour or two since the truth was sprung upon me. I am trying to think it over. I shall sell my horses and furniture, to begin with. I shall then move into a garret somewhere. Once in my garret, I shall begin to think away, like another Darwin.'

'Sit down, George, in my chair.' It was the lowest, longest, and most luxurious chair in the room. Sitting or lying in it, one looked completely under the control of anyone standing over the chair. Frances got up to make room for me. 'So, obedient boy! Now let me talk.'

'I listen, Frances. I still have ears.'

'The first duty of poverty—call it rather responsibility—the lower kind call it the privilege of poverty—is to accept the—the—sympathy and friendly advice—and——'

'The sympathy and the advice, Frances, by all means.'

She became very grave. 'George, we have known

each other so long that I can talk to you freely and openly. How long have we been friends?'

'About twenty-two years. Ever since we were able to run about.'

'That is a long time, is it not? And always friends.'

'Always friends—always the best of friends.'

'And we have always talked to each other freely, have we not?'

'Quite freely and openly. You have been the greatest happiness of my life, Frances.'

'And you of mine. So that we owe each other a quantity of things: gratitude, friendship, even—even, if necessary, a little sacrifice of—not principle or self-respect—say of pride.'

I knew very well what was coming. Anybody might have guessed.

'The greatest happiness of poverty—that which ought to make it the most coveted of all possessions—is that it constantly commands proof of the affection and interest felt towards one. That is a great thing, is it not?'

'I feel it already, Frances, and I am much touched by it.'

'Very well. So that poverty is already working for good in your heart.'

'Nay. Even when I was disgustingly rich I never doubted your interest in me.'

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'The next thing about poverty is that it must make men work, and may develop all that is best in them. Some men never find themselves—their own power—their lives are ruined—because they are never forced to work. That has been, so far, your case.'

'No, Frances. I should have done no good if I had worked like the busy bee.'

'All my life, George, much as I regard you, I have been thinking how much better you might have been. Oh! I don't mind telling you. You have never done any work at all. You went to school, and you idled away your time there; you went to Cambridge, and, of course, you idled away your time there. There has been no necessity. You have never worked because you must. Oh! I wonder that rich men ever achieve anything, seeing that no one teaches them the duty of work. I wish I had a school of rich boys. I would make them work harder than the poor boys. They should learn to work because they ought.'

'I am not clever, Frances. Work of the kind you mean is impossible for me. I was designed by nature for nothing better than a cabinet-maker. I believe I shall turn cabinet-maker, and so develop my higher nature and make you proud of me at last.'

'Not clever! Nonsense! You have never found out your own abilities; you are so ignorant in consequence

of your abominable laziness that you do not know even what you can do.'

'I can turn boxes. They come out, sometimes, quite pretty boxes.'

'All the time, George, I have been growing up side by side with you—the incomplete or undeveloped George—and with the complete George, a nobler creature; working when you remain idle; filled with ambition while you are content with obscurity. He is such a splendid man, George—and so like you, only better-looking.'

'That may very well be. If I were to find myself as you call it, I should find a very dull and plodding fellow not half so pleasant as the incomplete other—the undeveloped fellow who had not found himself.'

'Not dull at all. You have never done even common justice to yourself. Few men have such good natural abilities as yourself. Why, you show it in everything you do. If you have to make a speech it is full of wit; if you write a letter, it is running over with observation and humour; whether you ride, or shoot, or play games, or work at your lathe, you do it better than anybody else. Believe me, George, I know you better than you know yourself, better than anyone else knows you, because we have been friends so long.'

'Well, Frances, if it please you—and if it goes no

farther; for this is not a thing to be bruited abroad—I will accept all the attributes of genius.'

'Then we come back to the question, what will you do with your poverty?'

'And again I reply that I cannot yet, for the life of me, imagine. My lawyer has been advising me to go into the City as a Guinea-pig—that is, to lend my name to bogus companies at a guinea a sitting. It seems that if a man with a title will sell his name, people can be swindled with much greater ease. That does not look a promising line, does it?'

Frances shuddered. 'George, you are a gentleman!'

'Or I might use my small capital to qualify for a profession — there is my grandfather's line; but even allowing for those great abilities with which you credit me, I really could not read law.'

'Anything else?'

'Oh yes. Some men, it appears, buy a partnership in the City; some become stockbrokers.'

'I don't think that would suit you.'

'And some go out to California, fruit-farming. And that, Frances, seems the most hopeful line, so far.'

'Is that all that you can think of? Very well. Now let me suggest something for you—a much better line than any of these. You know what has always been my hope for you.'

'I know that you have sometimes dreamed of the impossible.'

'Yes—and—now—now that you will have no other distractions, now that you can begin and keep before you the goal—now, George, is the time for you to realize this dream of mine. Make yourself a career in politics.'

'My dear Frances, I could more easily make myself a career in mathematics.'

'Nonsense! You have the capacity; you want nothing but the will—the ambition. George, cannot I make you ambitious? Think—ask yourself—can there be anything nobler, more worthy of ambition, than to guide the destinies of a nation?—to make the history that will have to be written?'

'Put in that way, it certainly sounds very well.'

'Oh! They talk about poets and writers. What are the men who write about things compared with the men who do things? For my own part, I would rather be Bismarck than Shakespeare: no poet can render service to his country that can compare with the statesman who makes it great and powerful. There is no honour to compare with the honour, the gratitude, the immortality, which we confer upon such a man. No poet is to be named in the same breath with such a man.'

'I have long since made up my mind, Frances, that I will not become a poet. Whether, in consequence, I shall become a Bismarck—I doubt.'

She paid no attention to this remark.

'I have thought it all out. The thing is perfectly easy—for a man like yourself. You must belong to a party: you let them know that you want to enter the House on their side; you are a likely man and a promising man; they will find you a borough; you will contest that borough; you will win. Once in the House, you will work your way quickly or slowly, and command the attention and respect of the House and the recognition of your party, and so, by gradual steps, achieve a place even in the Cabinet. Why, my dear George, it is the experience of every day.'

I got out of the low and luxurious chair with some difficulty. One cannot be serious lying on one's back. And now I felt very serious. 'You see your statesman at the end of his career,' I said, 'distinguished if not respected. You do not understand how he has worked his way upwards, by what a tortuous path he has climbed. Moreover, you only see the greatest man, the leader. Now, my child, the kind of statesman I think of is the ordinary person who becomes towards the end of his career a Cabinet Minister. That person does not strike me as a noble character at all. Indeed, there

cannot be much nobility left in a man, so far as I can see, after twenty years' service of party. Think of the slavery of it; think of the dirt he has had to eat; think of the lies he has had to tell; think of the coat he has had to turn; think of the tricks he has had to practise; all to get votes—all to get votes!'

'You exaggerate, George.'

'No, I do not. However, it matters nothing what I think. The House is quite out of the question. I cannot afford it. You forget, Frances, that I have no money.'

She blushed crimson, she dropped her eyes, she trembled. 'George,' she said, with hesitation and embarrassment, 'again—do not be proud. It is the privilege of friendship—it is your privilege to let me find that—the means—you must accept of me.'

This was the great temptation. All that I had to do at that moment—I knew it would come—I was waiting for it—I was prepared for it—all that was wanted—of course I could not take the money she was offering—all that was wanted was to speak vaguely about ambition, to fall in with her hopes and dreams—one can always accept a dream or offer a dream—and the woman and her fortune and everything would be mine. Because I knew very well—a thousand indications had told me—that she loved that nobler and more complete

George of her imagination—not myself at all. I had only to pretend to be that nobler person, as full of ambition, as resolute for distinction. As for being in love, why, if you are always from childhood in the company of a girl, the passion called love, if it is awakened at all, is weak and puny compared with that which deals with the mystery of the unknown and strange. Still, there was the beautiful woman, my old friend, who only wanted to believe that I was strong and ambitious, and I only had to pretend. It was like the temptation of the Christian martyr—only a little pinch of incense—just one—and life and freedom, the enjoyment of the sunshine, were granted to me.

I took her hand and raised it to my lips. 'Twas the refusal of the Christian martyr. 'Not that way, Frances,' I said. 'Any way but that. I am going out of the world—up or down, I know not which. But, up or down, it cannot be by any such help as that.'

CHAPTER III.

THE COUSIN.

In these days of self-restraint we neither weep nor rage; we pour out neither lamentations nor curses. People used formerly to accept evil fortune with all the outward indications that the bolt of fortune had gone home.

When a young man of the old days lost his fortune, or his mistress, or both, I believe that he thought no scorn to let his wailings or his curses be heard by all the world. In these days the young man walks to his club —perhaps it will be his last appearance there—dines as usual with his everyday face and his smile for a friend, and presently goes home.

I am but a child of my generation; therefore I did this, and at ten o'clock or so I returned to my chambers.

Outside the door I found, to my astonishment, waiting for me, a man whose appearance was not familiar to me.

Perhaps a man with a little bill; but, then, I owed no man anything to speak of. Besides, ten o'clock is late for the man with the little bill. Perhaps someone from the stables; but, then, it was late for a messenger from the stables. The man was young, tall, and well set up; dressed well enough, but hardly with the stamp of to-day's Piccadilly.

'Are you Sir George Burnikel?' the man asked bluntly, without taking off his hat or touching the brim in the way common with servitors and messengers.

'I believe I am. But I do not seem to know you.'

'May I have ten minutes' conversation with you?'

'Certainly not, unless I know who you are and what you want. So, my friend, as ten o'clock at night is not the most usual time for a call, perhaps you will go away and write your business.'

'I have come a good step,' he persisted, 'and I have waited for two hours. If you could see me to-night, Sir George, I should be very much obliged.'

'Who are you, then?'

'My name is Robert Burnikel. I am a cousin of yours.'

'Never heard that I had any cousin of that name, I assure you.'

'I am a distant cousin. I do not want to beg or to

borrow money of you, I assure you. I came in the hope that you would listen to me, and perhaps give me some advice in a matter of the greatest importance to myself. By trade I am a boat-builder; I carry on the same business, in the same place, that your great-grandfather did before he quarrelled with his partner and left Wapping.'

After such an introduction I had no more hesitation, but I turned the key and threw open the door. 'Come in,' I said; 'I am sure it's all right. The hereditary calling of our family is boat-building. The head of the family should always be a boat-builder. Come in.' I led the way into the study, and touched the switch of the light. 'Now,' I said, 'if you like to sit down and talk I will listen. There are soda-water bottles and the usual accessories on the table, with cigarettes.'

My visitor declined the proffered hospitality. Now that he had taken off his hat and was sitting under the bright electric light, the cousin appeared at first to be merely a good-looking young man with a certain roughness of manner as of dress. But as I looked at him, I became gradually aware that this young man was most curiously like myself. I have broad shoulders, but his were broader; I am tolerably tall, but he was taller; my head is pretty large, but his was larger; my forehead is square, but his was squarer; my nose is straight, but

his was straighter. Even his hair was the same, and that grew in short, strong brown curls all over his head —the kind of hair that is never found decorating the skull of an ordinary weak-kneed Christian. The hair of Mr. Feeblemind and Mr. Ready-to-halt is invariably straight; therefore I have always been pleased to have stubbly, curly hair. His voice, too, was like my own, only stronger and fuller. To complete the resemblance, I had the short, broad fingers of a workman. These fingers force a man to buy a lathe; they never gave me any peace until I had got the lathe. My visitor had exactly the same hand, but it was larger. Strange, that upon so many generations a resemblance between two cousins should be so strong.

Mr. Robert Burnikel took a chair and cleared his throat. 'It is a personal matter,' he said, 'and it is somewhat difficult to begin.'

'Looks like borrowing money, after all,' I thought. 'If I may suggest,' I said, 'tell me something of the family history. It is ninety years since the connection of my branch with yours was broken off. I am, I regret to say, shamefully ignorant of my own people.'

'Well, Sir George, there was a boat-builder at Wapping died about the year 1780. He wasn't the first of the boat-builders by a hundred years and more; you will find his tomb—one of the fine square tombs—

on the south side of Wapping Church. This shows that he was a man of substance and responsibility. The churchyard is full of Burnikels. If you think it worth while to be proud of such a thing, you belong to the oldest and most respectable family of Wapping.'

'Of course one likes to feel that one has respectable ancestors.'

'That old man, who died at the age of eighty-five, was great-great-grandfather to both of us.'

'I see. Our cousinship starts a hundred years ago. It hath a venerable aspect.'

'He left two sons at least. Those two sons carried on the business in partnership until they died or retired. Then two of their sons—I don't know anything about the rest—took it over as partners. They quarrelled; I dare say you have heard why'—he looked up quickly and paused—'and they dissolved partnership. One came to this end of the town, and became a builder; the other stayed at Wapping, and his son, and his grandson, and his great-grandson—that's myself—have conducted that business ever since. I am now the sole owner of the concern.'

'It is rather bewildering at first. One would like it in black and white, though I never understood genealogical tables. However, the point is, that your branch of our family has remained at Wapping, carrying on the

old business, all these years. I fear there has been no intercourse between the two main currents of the stock.'

'None, I believe. But we were able to follow the fortunes of your branch.'

'There were other offshoots, I suppose—tributary streams, cadet branches—with you as with us?'

'Yes; some of us are in Australia; some are in Canada; some are in New Zealand; some are boat-builders; some of us are farmers; some of us are sailors; we are scattered all over the world.'

'And none of you rich?'

'None of us are rich. Your great-grandfather, though he called himself a builder, of course had no necessity to work.'

'No necessity to work? Why not?'

'Why, on account of his immense wealth.'

'Wealth? He had very little. Although, as to work, he was a most industrious person. He stamped his stucco image all over Kensington; he has become a name; he points architectural epigrams; he is the hero of the Burnikel age in this suburb. But he made very little money. Where did you get your notion of his enormous wealth?'

'Well——' The cousin looked doubtful, but for the moment he evaded the point. 'Then one of his

sons became a lawyer; and so, of course, his father being so rich——'

'Again you are misinformed. My great-grandfather left a moderate fortune, and my grandfather had his share of it, and no more.'

'We always understood, to be sure, that your grandfather, being so rich, was able to buy his place as Judge and his title.'

At this amazing theory, I jumped in my chair and sat upright. 'Good Lord, man!' I cried, 'where were you—where could you be—brought up? Where do they still preserve prejudices pre — pre — pre-mediæval?'

'I was born and brought up in Wapping.'

'Can remote Wapping be such a God-forsaken country as to believe that Judges buy their seats? Are you so incredibly ignorant as to believe that?'

'I don't know.' He coloured. 'Perhaps we were wrong. They said so. I never questioned it; I never really thought about it. My grandmother used to tell us so.'

'Your grandmother! Permit me to say, newly-found cousin, that my respect for the Wapping grandmother begins to totter. My grandfather was made Judge for the usual reason—that he was a very great lawyer.'

'He died worth a quarter of a million.'

'Well, and why the deuce should he not? If you make from five to ten thousand a year by your practice, and only spend one, and go on doing that for thirty years, and get five per cent. all the time for your money, you will find yourself worth all that at the end of the time. But why are you telling me all this stuff about my own people? Have you got something up your sleeve? Have it out, man.'

'Well, Sir George, the story of that bag of diamonds and things has never been forgotten. It rankled down to my own time. My father used to grow gloomy when business was bad and he thought of the diamonds.'

'What had that to do with my grandfather?'

'And the fortune that the Judge was reported to have left behind him—a quarter of a million—was exactly the value that old John Burnikel set upon the diamonds that your great-grandfather took.'

'My great-grandfather took? Man, you've got a bee in your bonnet. It was not that much-injured old man, but your great-grandfather — yours — who, I always understood, took the jewels.'

The cousin laughed gently, but shook his head.

'That was the story they told you, of course. Why, it is nearly a hundred years ago, and we have always been quite narrow in our means, working hard, living

carefully, and spending little—never a rich man among us. Those of us who were not in the business went to sea; not a single man died rich.'

'Then,' I said, 'you must have buried the precious diamonds. My great-grandfather left no more than a few thousands to his children, and my grandfather had great difficulty in keeping himself until his practice began and increased.'

'Well, they always told me——'

'If you come to that, they always told me——'

'If the bag was not taken by your great-grandfather, who could have taken it?'

'Yours, my dear sir—yours.'

'For no one knew of its existence except those two and the old man John Burnikel. And they found him dying and the bag gone. Not dead, or the bag might have been stolen by someone else; but sick and dying, and it was gone.'

'Well, Mr. Burnikel, you are a stranger to me, and I think I will not discuss any farther the delicate question as to who stole a bag ninety years ago. My ancestor certainly did not, and I do not wish to accuse your ancestor. Perhaps the bag was stowed away somewhere: in a bank; in a merchant's strong-room——'

'He was only a simple sailor. He knew nothing about banks or strong-rooms.'

'The person who took it—not necessarily your ancestor, and certainly not mine—put it somewhere, and died without revealing the secret. If you come to think of it, a bag of diamonds into which you dipped whenever you wanted to sell one was rather a dangerous kind of thing to keep. Boat-builders, as a rule, do not keep bags of diamonds lying loose. It is somewhere hidden away in your back-garden, perhaps.'

'Not ours.'

'Or perhaps there never was any bag of diamonds at all.'

'Oh yes, there was. We've got the old sailor's bed at home with the secret hiding-place at the head, and his chest brass-bound——'

'The empty chest proves the existence of the treasure, I suppose. However, that's enough about the bag of diamonds. You have not told me why you came here to-night. Not, I take it, to talk over the Legend of the Lost Treasure.'

'Well, Sir George, I thought to myself, we've always talked so much about that bag of diamonds, that if I mentioned the thing, there would be, perhaps, a feeling —a kind of sympathy—you to have all and me to have nothing. As it is, I can't understand what you say. I suppose we have been all wrong.'

'Let us acknowledge this bond—the common bond of a long ago common loss. And next?'

'The reason why I came here this evening is this: You know the world, and I do not. I want your advice. It is this way. I mean to rise in the world. Wapping is all very well—what there is of it. But, after all, it is not everything.'

'Not everything, I suppose.'

'It is, in fact, only a corner of the world. I mean to get out of it.'

'Very good. Why not?'

'I see everywhere men no better than myself—not so good—working men, getting distinction on the School Board and on the County Council, and even'—he gasped—'even Elsewhere,' he said, with a kind of awe. 'And I don't see why I should not get on too.'

'Why not?—why not? If you like the kind of work.'

'In short, Sir George—you will not laugh at me—I mean to go into the House.'

'Why should I laugh at you? And why should you not go into the House if you want to, and if a constituency will send you there?'

'I will show you afterwards, if you like, on another occasion, my chances and my fitness.'

'To-night you will explain to me where I come in—

why you come to me. I am the worst person in the world to advise.'

'I do not ask advice about my own intentions,' said the political candidate stiffly. 'I advise myself. I am going into the House. What I want you to tell me is this—I have no means at Wapping of finding out how one sets to work in the first instance, how you let people know that you are going to stand, how you find a borough, what it costs, and all the rest of it. If you can give or get for me this information, Sir George, it is all that I shall ask you, and I shall be extremely obliged to you.'

'I can't give it, but I can get it for you, I dare say. At all events, I will try.'

'That is very kind of you. Let me once get it'—the man's eyes flashed—'and I will succeed. I am an able man, Sir George—I am not boasting; I am stating a plain fact—I am a very able man, and I shall get on. You shall see. You shall not be ashamed to own your cousin. I shall rise.'

He did rise, perhaps to illustrate his prophecy. He got up and took his hat.

'I know exactly what I want,' said this confident young man—yet the arrogance of his words was tempered by a certain modesty of utterance—'and I know how to get it. But I must get into the House

first. I've planned it all out. It takes time to make one's way. In five years' time—I only ask five years—I shall be Home Secretary.'

'What?'

'Home Secretary,' he repeated calmly. 'Nothing less than that to begin with.'

'Oh, nothing less than that!'

'After that I don't say, nor do I even think. Why, there are a dozen men now in the House who have gone in like me in order to get distinction. I read the debates, and I see how these men get on. And I understand their secret, which is open to all. I'm not going to join any party. I shall be an Independent member, and I shall rise by my own exertions and my own abilities.'

I remembered that afternoon's dream about myself. Good heavens! And here was this man—of my own name, of my own age, so much like myself, this cousin—coming to me with exactly the ambition desired for me by Lady Frances! Was this man who called himself a boat-builder—perhaps in some allegorical sense—really myself? The builder of a boat might be the builder of a man. Was this cousin my own nobler self, the complete and fully-developed George?

'I should like,' my visitor continued, 'to show you that I am not an empty boaster. Let me call again.

Or perhaps you would wish to see the place that you came from. Come to Wapping to see me. The yard is not a bit changed. It is just what it was two hundred years ago when the first Burnikel came to the place. Come at any time; I am always there.'

'Thank you. I will call upon you to-morrow afternoon. Good-night; and, I say, when you have nothing better to do, dig up the back-garden, and find that precious bag. It may help to pay your election expenses.'

He departed. I remained strangely disturbed. After all the events of the day—the loss of fortune, the fatal absence of ambition—to meet this man—arrogant, presumptuous, ignorant. Home Secretary to begin with! A tradesman of the East End! And yet—yet there was something in the calm confidence of the man, and in the look of strength. But—Home Secretary to begin with!

CHAPTER IV.

WAPPING.

How does one get to Wapping? It is not, I believe, generally known that there are trains which take the explorer to this secluded hamlet. They are the same trains which go under the Thames Tunnel. Before entering upon that half-mile of danger, the engine stops at a station, dark and uncertain, deep down in the bowels of the earth, and unprovided with a lift. It is a fearful climb to the top of those stairs, but when you do arrive, you find yourself in the very heart of the quarter—in fact, in Wapping High Street itself. This is one way of getting to Wapping. Another, and a much better way, is to walk there from Tower Hill, past St. Katherine's Docks, where you may drop a tear over the wanton destruction of what should have been Eastminster, the Cathedral of East London, the House and Church of St. Katherine by the Tower, with its Deanery, its Close, its gardens all ready for promotion,

and even, like Westminster, its adjacent slums. The traveller then enters Nightingale Lane, wondering when the nightingale was last heard here, and presently finds himself in a long riverside street. Tall warehouses and wharves are on the south side; on the north side, offices. North of the offices are the Docks. Between the warehouses are stairs. Here are Hermitage Stairs, and since there is a Hermitage Street, there was probably at one time or other a hermit established on this spot. A most desirable spot it must have been for a hermit of a gloomy turn, being then a moist, swampy, oozy, marshy, tidal kind of place, most eligible for any hermit who desired all the discomforts of his profession.

In those days the place was Wapping-in-the-Ouse: afterwards it became Wapping-on-the-Wall, and a dry place, without even a frog or an evvet, or a single shake of ague. And then the hermit fled in disgust to Canvey Island, and only the memory of him now remains. Then one comes to Wapping Old Stairs; a name for ever for the sake of the Faithful One; and Execution Stairs, where they drowned people, tying them to a stake up which the rising tide gradually crept—oh! how gradually, how slowly!—till it came to the chin and the lips. Then the bargee, going up with the flood, saw above the surface of the lapping wave, half a face, white, with staring eyes that took their last look of the sunshine

and the ships and the broad river, while the water rose a half-inch more, and life indignant fled!

Then one saw a black, brown or red lump above the water, with floating hair—for sailors wore it long; then this too disappeared, and there was nothing left but the top of the stake and the quiet whisper of the water as it flowed past. For three times, ebb and flow, that criminal remained upon his stake; the first for the doing unto death; the next two for an example unto the young and a terror unto evil-doers. After that they took him up and buried him, or hung him in chains, tarred but not feathered. Gruesome are the memories of Execution Dock; many are the ghosts who haunt, all unseen—because there is nobody in wharf or warehouse after business hours to see them—the spot where they were done to death. It was, however, lower down the river, round the Isle of Dogs, that they hung up the black body in creaking chains until it dropped to pieces.

If you want to see the river—the view of the river was the pride of Wapping until the warehouses replaced the old gabled timber-houses—go down one of the lanes which lead to the Stairs. Then you will obtain a panoramic view set in a frame—a tall, narrow picture, a section of the busy river, across which pass all day long up or down the great ocean steamer, the little river steamer, the noisy tug, the sailing-ship, the barge laden

with hay, or iron, or casks, down to the water's edge, the wherries, with which this part of the Thames is always crowded. What they do; what makes them so full of business and zeal—no one can discover.

Beyond the river are the mills and granaries and warehouses of Rotherhithe, with the white steeple of the church. The lane in which you stand is, in fact, a much finer kinetoscope than Mr. Edison has invented; it presents you with a picture of ceaseless, changeful motion; of restless activity; of ordered purpose.

Then go back and resume your walk along the street. It is, like the river itself, a busy highway of trade; the tall warehouses were built for trade; the cranes are out on the topmost floor, conducting the trade; men are swinging out heavy bales of goods and lowering them into waggons, which will distribute the trade among other hands. The street, indeed, is full of waggons loaded and waggons unloaded; waggons standing under the cranes, waggons going away loaded and coming back empty. You would not believe there were so many waggons in London. Except for the drivers of the waggons and the men in the upper stories tossing about the bales, there are no people to be seen in the street. Passengers there are none. Nobody walks in Wapping High Street except to and from his warehouse or his wharf. He goes there on business. Of shops

there are but two or three, and those not of the best. And this is Wapping. It seems at first to be nothing but a narrow slip between the river and the docks. This is not quite true, however, as we shall presently see.

I entered the cradle of my race, fortunately, by the best way, the Tower Hill way. It seems a cradle to be proud of; all ancient crafts are honourable, but some are more honourable than others; surely boat-building is a very honourable craft. Consider: Noah was an eminent boat-builder; the finest example of his work has never been surpassed; we are all descended from Noah, therefore we ought all to have boat-building instincts. As to the antiquity of boats, it goes back beyond the time of Noah. The first boat, if you think of it—the only way to get at prehistoric history is to think of it—was a cradle, a wicker basket cradle, lined with soft fur; there was a baby in it—an antediluvian Patriarch baby. The cradle—I am giving away quite a new Archæological discovery—was placed by the child's mother by the riverside, and left, but only for a few minutes; then the waters suddenly rose and swept the cradle away; the agonized mother saw it in the midst of the flood, pursued by a hungry crocodile. She looked to see the cradle sink; it did not, it quietly drifted into a bank or haven of refuge, the baby unhurt, and the baffled crocodile sullenly sank to the bottom.

Hence arose the building of the first boat, the shape of which, and of all boats to follow, was copied from the cradle. The first boat-builder, I believe, was named Burnikel, whose grand-daughter married Noah's father. However, it was not so much out of pride in the boat-yard that I came to Wapping as from the desire to see more of this strange, strong, resolute, ambitious cousin of mine.

Of course, I had never been here before. Men of my upbringing know nothing, hear nothing, and understand nothing, of the busy life, the productions, the exports, the imports, the enterprise, the risks, the fluctuations, the skill, the courage, which belong to the trade of our great ports. The merchant adventurer is unknown to us. We ignore, or we despise, the men by whose enterprise we actually live. Not that we understand this; yet it is a hard fact that the gilded youth depends upon the trade of the country as much as the merchant who directs, the shopkeeper who distributes, the very waggoner and the bargee, and the man who slings the bales upon the crane. Money, you see, can no longer be carried about in sacks of gold. It must be invested: and every investment, whether gas, or water, or railways, or mines, or trading companies, or municipal bonds, or even consols, depends upon the success of a venture. And since agriculture is dead

or dying, there is nothing left except these ventures. Should they fail, should disaster suddenly overtake the British industries, then the whole wealth of the country would vanish at once, and the youth of Piccadilly would be as penniless as the poor fellows of the warehouses, thrown out of work. But this the youth of Piccadilly knows not. I know these things because I have been made to learn them.

For the first time, therefore, I found myself in the midst of trade, actual, visible, tangible—fragrant, even. It was a kind of discovery to me. I walked along slowly revolving the thing. Exports and imports one reads about: they are words which to me had then little or no meaning. Here were people actually exporting and importing with tremendous zeal. The street was a hive of industry. Not one face but was full of business; not one but was set, absorbed, serious, observing nothing because it was so full of thought. No one lit cigarettes; no one lounged; no one talked or laughed with his neighbour. All were occupied, all wrapt in thought. All walked with a purpose: no less a purpose, indeed, than the winning of the daily bread, or the creation of a pile on which the children—which would be the very greatest misfortune for them—could live in idleness.

Presently I came to the mouth of the London Dock,

where a swing-bridge crosses the narrow entrance, and is rolled back on hinges to let the ships pass in and out. It was open when I reached the place, and a ship was slowly passing through: a three-masted sailing-ship, of which there are still some left. I watched the beautiful thing with the tall masts and shrouds—man never made anything more beautiful than a sailing-ship. Looking to the left, I saw the crowded masts in the dock; looking to the right, I saw the ships going down the river, and heard the dulcet note of the Siren. All this meant, I perceived dimly, buying and selling. The ships bring immense cargoes to be sold in London and distributed everywhere. All the selling must be at a profit, otherwise these waggons would not be employed, and these warehouses would be closed, and Wapping-on-the-Wall would be as silent and as solitary as Tadmor-in-the-Desert. All this buying and selling meant the employment and the maintenance of millions. Trade, I began to understand, is a very big thing indeed—a thing which demands enterprise and courage; which requires also knowledge and skill; which abounds with chances and changes and perils and hopes.

The ship passed through: the bridge swung round: I passed over it and continued my way. At this point Wapping widens and becomes a right-angled triangle, whose hypothenuse is the river and whose altitude is

the East London Dock. This triangle, with the river-side street, is all that the docks have left of old Wapping village. On this occasion, however, I did not discover the triangle; I walked on, the street continuing with its warehouses and its wharves and its river stairs.

A little beyond the bridge I came to a house which would have arrested my attention by its appearance alone, apart from the name upon its door-plate. For it was a solid red brick, eighteenth-century house. The bricks were of the kind which grow more beautiful with years. The door, with a shell decoration above it, was in the middle, and there was one window on each side of it. In the two stories above there were three windows in each: the roof was of warm red tiles. There were green shutters to the lower windows: a solid, comfortable old house. It was well kept up: the paint was fresh; the windows were clean; the steps were white; the brass door-plate, which was small, was burnished bright, and on it, in letters half effaced, I read the name of Burnikel.

'The cradle!' I thought. 'Here was born the ancestral builder of boats. But where is the yard?'

On the other side of the street stood a huge rambling shed—two sheds side by side, built of wood and painted black. Through the wide-open door I saw the stout

ribs of a half-built barge sticking up in readiness to receive the planking of her sides. And there was the sound of hammers. And, to make quite sure, there was painted across the shed in white letters the name 'Burnikel and Burnikel, Boat and Barge Builders.'

I stepped in and looked round. There were one or two unfinished boats beside the big barge; wood was lying about everywhere, stacked on the low rafters of the roof, in heaps, thick wood and thin wood; there were tools and appliances—some I understood, some were new to me. Men were working. At the sight of all this carpentry work, my spirits rose. This was the kind of work I loved. A beautiful place, such a place, I thought, as I would like to work in myself. Even in those early days, you see, I had a soul above a lathe in a study. A lathe is a toy; this yard was for serious work. And picturesque, too, with its high roof and its black rafters, and its front open to the river, commanding a noble panorama, wider than is afforded by any of the stairs in those narrow lanes.

Nobody took any notice of me. The men just looked up and went on hammering. A well-ordered yard, apparently.

At that moment the master came out of a little enclosed box in the corner, called 'Office,' which was big enough, at least, for a high desk and some books.

At the outset, in the evening, I had remarked the curious resemblance of my cousin to myself. By daylight the resemblance was not so marked, partly because the man was so much bigger. He was one of those men with whom a simple six-foot in height makes them tower over all other men. He looked tall and broad, and strong above any of his fellows. So looked Saul. He looked around him quickly as he came out, as if to see that his men were all working with zeal and knowledge. Then he stepped across the yard and greeted his visitor gravely.

'I saw you come in,' he said. 'I only half expected you, because, I thought, why should you want to see the old place?'

'Well, I did want to see the old place. And I wanted to see you again.'

'Here it is, then, and here I am. Not much of a place, after all, but there's a tidy business done here, and always has been, and no change in the place since it was first put up, and that's two hundred years ago. Just the same; the yard is the same, the beams of the roof are the same, if the tiles have been removed, and the work is the same. If your ancestor was to look in here, he'd see nothing changed but the workmen's clothes. They've left off aprons, and they've left off stockings. That's all.'

'Good. We are thus in the last century.'

'Yes. The river's changed, though. The Port of London was a much finer place formerly, when there were no docks, and the ships were ranged in double line all down the Pool, and all the landing was done by barges—Burnikel's barges—and the river was covered with boats—Burnikel's boats — cruising about among the ships. We'll go for a cruise if you like, any day, in my boat. It is the old boat; here she is.' The boat was lying in the river, made fast to the quay pile. 'We used to board the ships as they came in for the repair of their boats. Now there's no need. They all go into dock. There are some pictures over the way of the river in the last century. You shall see them presently.'

'Thank you.'

'We can't make better boats now than they made a hundred and fifty years ago; we can't put in better work nor better material. They knew good work. Everything except steam things they knew how to make, then, far better than we do now. Burnikel's barges are built after the old pattern. This barge, for instance'—he laid his hand on a rib of the unfinished craft—'she is built on eighteenth-century lines.'

'She looks substantial enough.'

'She is. Well. Look around you, Sir George. This is where your great-grandfather worked, and your great-

great-grandfather, and so on, ever so far back. This is where you came from.'

He took his visitor over the little yard, pointing out something of the craft and mystery of boat-building.

'All this,' I said, 'interests me enormously. You know I've got a lathe, and I know a little how to make things—useless things. It is all I can do—my one accomplishment.'

'There's not many of your sort who can do so much. Well, there's not much here to make a show, but there's a good deal to learn in boat-building, let me tell you.'

'I ought to have boat-building in the blood,' I observed. 'The mystery seems familiar to me. Don't you think that so many generations of boat-building—with this little break of just two lives, one a Judge, and one a—nothing—ought to make me take to the trade naturally, as a duck to water?'

Robert Burnikel answered seriously. He was a very serious young man. Besides, light conversation is unknown at Wapping.

'Why not?' he said. 'Natural aptitude must come with generations of work. There is a kind of caste in every trade. I know a succession of carpenters, from father to son; and a succession of watchmakers; and a succession of blacksmiths. These men of mine are all the sons of boat-builders; they grew up in the trade.

I don't think they could have done anything else so well. As for you—well, your grandfather was a Judge.'

'For the first time in my life, I am ashamed to say that he was.'

'Not that you need be ashamed, I suppose, but, still, he broke the succession. All the rest of us have always been boat-builders or sailors.'

'For the moment I feel an enthusiasm of boat-building. The only practical work worth considering is this. I am convinced it is the hereditary instinct.'

'Well, you can't know anything about it, instinct or not.'

'I suppose, now, that you could make a boat yourself, with your own hands, from keel to gunwale, from stem to stern?'

'He would be a poor kind of master who couldn't do anything better than his men. I used to work, hammer, and saw, and plane, with the men when I was a prentice.'

We talked about boats and boat-building till the subject was exhausted. The Master Craftsman looked at his watch.

'Four o'clock,' he said. 'Now come over the way. I live in the old house built by the first of them who came here. We can talk for an hour or so before tea. I told them you might be coming to tea.'

CHAPTER V.

THE FAMILY HOUSE.

The old house proved to be even older than it looked. 'It was built,' said the present owner, 'by the first of the Wapping Burnikels. I don't know where he came from; but he was already a man of substance when he built this house. That was in the time of James the Second. It was close by here—at a low riverside tavern —that Judge Jeffreys hid himself, and it was our ancestor who discovered him and gave him up to justice. At least, so they say.'

Within, it was the house of a solid and substantial merchant, who understood the arts of comfort. The Hall was wainscoted with a dark polished oak relieved by a line of gold along the top, and lit by a broad window on the stairs; it contained no other furniture than a tall old clock ticking gravely, and the large model of a boat under a glass case. The staircase was broad and stately: such a staircase as is impossible in a

narrow London house, where the unhappy tenants have to climb up and down a ladder. Robert Burnikel opened the door of the room on the left. 'Come in here,' he said, 'till tea is ready. We can talk at our ease in here. This is my own room.' He looked around with some pride, not so much in the old-world beauty of the room, in which anyone might have taken pride, as in the things which belonged to, and proclaimed, his own studies. It would be difficult indeed to find anywhere a more beautiful room. The walls were of panelled cedar, dark and polished; over the mantel was a mass of carved wood, grapes in bunches, vine-leaves, scrolls, branches, heads of Cupids, all apparently thrown together upon the wall, but there was method in the mass; the fruit and the leaves formed a frame round a shield on which were blazoned—or and gules and azure, in proper heraldic colours, a coat-of-arms.

'Why,' I cried, 'those are my arms! I thought they were granted to the Judge as the first "Armiger" of the family. He had them already, then. This is very curious. We were a family of gentlefolk.'

'As if that matters!' said the representative of the race. 'There's always been that Thing belonging to us.'

'The man who built this house may have been a pretender, but I doubt it. People did not assume arms so readily in those days. It was a kind of robbery.'

'Oh! the arms are ours fast enough, if we want them. I've got an old seal upstairs with the first boat-builder's arms on it.'

'Where did he come from? Do you know?'

'I don't know. That's his portrait, perhaps. And perhaps it isn't. Why inquire about the dead? We are only concerned with the living.'

On one side of the mantel hung a portrait in oils of a dead and gone Burnikel. He wore white lace ruffles, a white lace neckcloth, a colossal wig, and he had the smooth, fat cheek and double chin of his generation, which was a bibulous, armchair-loving generation.

'I believe,' Robert repeated, 'that this is the man who came here first, but it is not certain. It may be his son or his grandson. Did you think really that your family began with the Judge, Sir George?'

'Well, I never heard much about his predecessors, except that story of the lost diamonds.'

'Now you see. The first man of whom we know anything builds this fine house, lines it with cedar and rosewood, and oak wainscoting; adorns it with wood-carving——'

'That overmantel work might belong to a later time,' I interrupted. 'It looks like Grinling Gibbons, though. He may have done it—or perhaps one of his scholars.'

'And had a coat-of-arms. He was a gentleman, I

suppose, if you care about that fact. I don't. Gentleman or not, he did not despise the craft of boat-builder.'

'Yes, I do care about that fact. Gentility is a real thing, whatever you may think. I am very glad indeed to recover this long-lost ancestor.'

On the other side of the mantel was a large oval mirror. Its duty, which it discharged faithfully, was to catch the light, and so to relieve the room of some of the shadows which lay about in the corners, shifting from place to place as the day went on, until the evening fell, when the candles were reflected in the polished walls, and the room was ghostly to those who ever thought upon the dead and gone. One side of the room, however, was completely spoiled as regards the original intention of him who clothed it with cedar by the introduction of a bookcase covering the whole wall, and fitted with books. There was a central table littered with papers, and a smaller table with a row of books. And there were only two chairs, both of them wooden chairs with arms—the students' chair. The books, one might observe, had the external appearance of having been read and well used; the bindings being cracked or creased and robbed of their pristine shininess. I looked at them. Heavens! What a serious library of solid reading! Herbert Spencer, Mill, Hallam, Freeman,

Stubbs, Hamilton, Spinoza, Bagehot, Seeley, Lecky, and a crowd of others for history; Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Wallace, and more for science; rows of books on the institutions of the country and on the questions of the day.

'These are my books.' Robert pointed to them with undisguised pride. 'I don't believe there's a better collection this side of the Tower. I collected them all myself. You see, my people were never given much to books. My father in the evening smoked his pipe. His father smoked his pipe in the evening. The girls of the family did their sewing all the time. They didn't want to read. All the books we had stood in two shelves in a cupboard. They were chiefly devotional books. "Meditations among the Tombs," "Sermons," "Reflections for the Serious," "Pilgrim's Progress," and such-like—mighty useful to me. So I had to collect my own books. And, mind you, no rubbish among them all—no silly novels and poetry and stuff—all good and useful books. And, what's more, I've read them every one, and I know them all.'

I now began to understand how he had been training for the post of Home Secretary.

'I wish I had read half as many,' I said. 'I assure you that I seldom feel any curiosity as to what may be inside a book.'

'Well, if you only read what most of 'em do you are quite as well out of it. Novels! Sickening love-stories —I've tried that kind. And poetry! Pah! Now, here on these shelves is something worth reading. These books have made me the man I am.'

'I suppose,' I ventured, 'that you are not married?'

'No, I am not. No, sir. Marriage holds a man down just where it finds him. If I were married I should be wheeling the perambulator, fidgeting about the children, insuring my life for the children, saving money for the children, running for the doctor. No. I shall marry some day—when I have succeeded. Not before.'

'Then, you have a mother or a sister living with you?'

'No. Father died five years ago, and there were left my mother with myself, two brothers and a sister. The business isn't good enough for more than one. So my two brothers went off to Tasmania, and they've started a yard of their own, and they tell me it's going to pay. My mother went out to see them, and I think she'll stay. You see, mother is a determined kind of a woman; she'd always been master here, father being an easy kind of man, and she wanted to go on being master. Now, there can't be two masters in this house. So, when she came to understand that, she concluded

to go. My sister Kate went with her. Kate wanted to be master too. So it's just as well, for family peace and quietness, that they did go away. I'm all for peace, and always shall be, but I mean to be master in my own house.'

The speech revealed things volcanic; the son of the mother, the mother of the son; the sister of the brother, the brother of the sister—all masterful, and all striving for the mastery. And the son getting the best of it. So he made a solitude, and he called it peace.

'And you are left all alone in this great house?'

'No. Some cousins of mine—not your cousins—mother's cousins, live here and keep the house for me. They are a retired skipper and his daughter. The daughter does the housekeeping. She is also my secretary, and keeps the accounts of the place over the way. She's a clever girl in her way, always right to a farthing with the accounts; and she copies things for me when I want passages copied. Can't follow an argument, of course. No woman can.' This is to have lived all your life at Wapping. 'You'll see her presently. I've told her, by the way, if that matters—only I want you to understand how I stand, and what sort of a man I am—that I shall marry her one of these days, when I have got on. Not before. You see, I want a wife who won't be thinking all the time

about her clothes and company and stuff. I train my own wife in my own way. It may be ten years, or twelve years, or forty, that she'll have to wait. Of course,' he snorted, 'she doesn't expect any fondling and kissing and foolishness.'

'Poor girl!' I did not say this. I only murmured, 'Yes, I see, of course,' in the usual way when one is surprised, and a coherent reply is difficult.

'I only tell you this because I am consulting you about myself, and you ought to know everything. Otherwise, it's a perfectly unimportant affair.'

'Only a woman.'

'That's all. One must marry, some time, and it's as well to know what you are about. Not that I'm afraid of any woman. Still, it saves trouble to get your wife into proper order before you begin.'

'My own opinion, quite. Whether it will be my wife's opinion or not I cannot say.'

Here was a gallant lover for you! Here was an ardent lover! Here, in the language of the last century, were flames and darts, and pains and madness of love! He was going to wait for ten or twelve or forty years, until he had achieved the object of his ambition; and there was to be no fondling, and the future wife was to be reduced to proper order!

'And now,' said the man of ambition abruptly,

'about that information that you promised to get for me. That's what we came here to talk about, not coats-of-arms and girls. Have you got it?'

'I have been to see a man whom I know. He is a politician; he lives in politics; he thinks about nothing else. And I spent this morning with him discussing your case—much as you told me last night. I can only tell you'—I felt a little embarrassed, for obvious reasons—'what he told me.'

'Go on. What did he say? That a boat-builder from Wapping mustn't dare to think of the House?'

'Not at all. They don't mind much what a man is by calling. What I understood last night is this: You wish to go into the House and to make your way upwards by your own abilities, alone. You will force the House to recognise you.'

'Yes. My model is John Bright. I've got his speeches, and I know his history.'

'But John Bright became in the long-run a Party man.'

'John Bright was a power in the country as an independent member long before he went into the Cabinet. I want to be a power in the country.'

'Well, my friend says that the time of the Independent Member is gone. The only way to get on, nowadays, is to belong to a Party from the outset. Do you know

what that means? You have to fall in and obey orders; you must not advance opinions of your own unless they happen to be those of the Party; you must vote as you are told; you must advocate whatever the leaders do. When you have proved yourself a good servant—trustworthy, unscrupulous, and loyal—then, and not till then, if you fit in other respects, and if there is nobody in the way, and if you are personally liked by the Cabinet, and if there is any vacancy into which you could be pushed, then, and not till then, you might get promoted, and so rise.'

'Oh,' he snarled again defiantly, 'we shall see. What next?'

'You will, of course, belong to the Liberal side. All the men who want to get on enter on that side, because the others have got young men of their own. If you do not know a constituency where you think you would have a chance, the Party, supposing they approve of you as a candidate, will perhaps find you one. They've always got a list of boroughs where they want a good candidate. Then you must set yourself to become agreeable to the electors; you must stay there, lecture them, humour them, coax and cajole and flatter and fawn to them—my man didn't say all this, but he meant it—above all, you must promise them everything they want. It is perfectly easy, though it does seem rather dirty work. But it

has to be done, and by yourself, because it can't be done by deputy.'

'I shall not do it.'

'As you please. You know that there is a Party Committee in every borough. You will have to study that Committee, and all the members. Lastly, you will have to undergo the process of heckling, which a man of your temper will, I imagine, find extremely disagreeable.'

'I shall get in, Sir George, without any of these tricks; and I shall get in as an Independent Member. I will neither fawn to my people nor flatter them. I shall say: "Here am I, your candidate; elect me." And I shall go in pledged to neither side.'

'Then, my cousin, between the two you will fall to the ground.'

'No; I shall succeed. You do not understand yet, Sir George, that you have to do with a very able man indeed.'

This kind of talk may be arrogant and offensive; but Robert Burnikel was neither. He made an arrogant assertion with a calmness which was modesty. He advanced it as one who states a scientific fact. Belief in himself was a part of the man's nature. More than this, as you will see: he succeeded in convincing those who heard him.

'Now for my fitness,' he went on. 'Listen to this. First of all, there's nobody like me in the House at all. I am a Master Craftsman. Formerly there were hundreds of crafts all carried on in London. They made everything. There were in every craft the masters and the men. The master knew the craft as well as the men. I make what I sell. I am not a shopkeeper; I make. That is a great difference, because it helps me to understand the Labour Question—work, wages, hours, and all the rest of it. There are working men in the House: shopkeepers, manufacturers, lawyers, country gentlemen; but the Master Craftsman the House hasn't got, and it wants him badly.'

'Well?'

'That is not all. This place, so secluded and cut off by the docks and its river, is a little world in itself. You can study everything in Wapping. I know the working of the whole system—parish, vestry, County Council, School Board, everything. I understand the education business, because I know my own men and their families, and what they want, and the foolishness of what they get. I understand the Poor Law business. I know all about the Church, the parish, the school, the workhouse, the parish rates. That's practical knowledge. But that is not enough. One must understand principles. All institutions are based on principles. So

I have read Herbert Spencer and Mill, and all the books that treat of practical things and what they mean. There is an ideal standard in every institution—the thing aimed at—and there is a practical level which is as near as we can get. They are sometimes very wide apart; they are kept apart by the selfishness of the men for whom the system has been devised. We must never lose sight of the ideal, and we must work steadily to bring the attainable nearer to the ideal.'

'Go on.' I grew more and more interested in this man—this strong man.

'Well, I read the debates every day. Nothing interests me in the paper so much as the debates. Day after day I say to myself, when I read the rubbish that is talked there: "This is wrong; this is ignorant; this is foolish; this is mischievous; this man doesn't understand the first facts of the case." And so on. Because, you see, when a man has got the workings of one single parish like this firmly fixed in his mind, with the history and the meaning of every institution in it—and they are all in it—from a coroner's jury up to a General Election, he's got an amount of practical knowledge that covers nearly the whole field of home politics.'

'Well, but you are as yet untried in oratory and in debate.'

'Not at all. I went into the Blackwall Parliament at sixteen; at twenty I led the House. I can speak; not to pour out floods of slushy talk. I tell you I can speak. I have studied the art of oratory; I have read all I could find on the subject. I have also read many great speeches—Bright's, above all. I told you just now, Sir George, that I am an able man. I now tell you that I am an eloquent man. I know that the House doesn't want claptrap. I spoke at Poplar last winter, and I made 'em laugh and made 'em cry just as I chose, and because I wanted to try what I could do with them. That was only claptrap. I can speak better than that. And as for my voice, listen: Do, Re, Mi——' He ran up and down the scales not only with correctness and ease, but with a flexible, rich, and musical baritone. 'That's good enough for anything, isn't it? Why, as soon as I found I had a voice, I rejoiced, because I knew that for such work as I resolved, even then, to go in for, a voice is most useful. I went into the church choir in order to learn the use of it. I sing there every Sunday for practice. I didn't want to sing in the choir; it wastes good time; but there is the practice. Nothing like singing for keeping the voice flexible.'

'Very good—very good indeed.'

'Well, I have told you everything. What do you

think about my fitness to go into the House to-morrow, and to rise in it?'

The question was meek. The manner was aggressive. It said plainly, 'Deny, if you dare, my fitness.'

At that moment the door was opened, and a girl's head appeared. 'Tea is ready,' she said, and disappeared.

'Let us go in to tea,' I said; 'and then I will answer your question.'

CHAPTER VI.

'TEA IS READY.'

Tea was served in the room on the other side of the Hall. Like the study, this room was a lovely old room also, completely wainscoted with cedar. There were the same carvings over the mantel—fruit, flowers, grapes, leaves and branches, and the shield with the family coat-of-arms. The room was, however, lighter than the study, partly because it contained in each of the upper panels family portraits, and on the panels below oil-paintings representing the river as seen from the boat-yard, with its ships, barges, hoys, lighters, boats, and all the life and motion and business of the river in the last century. So little regard for art was there in the family that no one knew who had painted these panels. Yet it was no mean hand which had designed and executed them. Many indications pointed to the daily occupancy of the room by the household. In the window, for instance, stood a small table, with a work-basket placed

there out of the way. There was a sideboard—period, the second George—of mahogany, black with age. It was one of the kind consisting of two square towers, each with a locked door and two compartments within, and a broad, flat connecting-piece with a drawer. In the middle portion stood a noble old punch-bowl, surrounded by glasses—lovely old glasses: the convivial rummer, the useful tumbler, the tall champagne glass, the old-fashioned little port glass, the tiny liqueur glass —a beautiful assortment such as a mere modern cannot understand. On one side of the towers stood a glass filled with spring flowers; and on the other, as if belonging to the masculine sex, a case for spirits. On the panels above the pictures was a row of plates; they had stood there for a hundred years, only taken down from time to time to be dusted. On the other side of the room, opposite to the door, was a cottage piano, open, with music piled on the top. In one corner, near the fireplace, was a little stack of churchwarden pipes; and in the other corner was a door, half open, which revealed a surprising cupboard. The eighteenth-century housewife demanded so many store-rooms for all her jams, jellies, pickles, wines, cordials, and strong waters; so many still-rooms, linen-rooms, and pantries for the immense collections which her family wanted for the successful conduct of a household, that it became necessary to have

a cupboard in the parlour, or general living-room, as well. This cupboard belonged to the Burnikels of the last century; but its use was continued by the present occupants. Here were kept the cups and saucers, old and new; here was the plate-basket, containing the forks and spoons in daily use—silver, not plated, and thin with age; here were certain books of devotion which once formed the family library—they were those referred to by Robert; here were tea-caddy, coffee-caddy, and sugar-basin; here were the decanters which belonged to the Sunday dinner; here were household account books; here was the corkscrew; here were mysterious phials; here were kept the marking ink, the writing ink, the pens and paper; here was the current pot of jam; here were the lemons; here, in short, the thousand and one things likely to be wanted every day by the household. For this room was the family keeping or living room; it was not the dining-room or the breakfast-room: it was the parlour. Robert's room had been the best parlour until he changed it into the study.

One did not take in all these details at once; but I had abundant opportunities afterwards of noting everything. Meantime, what I observed first of all was that 'tea' meant sitting down to a table covered with a white cloth, spread with a magnificent display of good things.

I remembered my cousin's ominous words: 'I told them that you might come in to tea.' 'They' had provided this square meal in hospitality for me.

The girl who sat behind the tea-tray, ready to serve, was doubtless the housekeeper, accountant, secretary, clerk, whom my cousin was some day going to marry. A slight, delicate-looking girl she appeared to be; and she seemed shy, her head drooping. Beside her stood, supported by a stick, an elderly man.

'This is Captain Dering,' said my cousin, introducing his friend, 'and this is Isabel Dering.'

The girl bowed stiffly. The Captain extended a friendly hand.

'Glad to make your acquaintance, sir,' he said heartily. 'There was a time when I made new friends every voyage, but those times are over. The sight of a stranger at Wapping is a rare event, I assure you.'

'Especially,' I said, 'a stranger who comes in search of a long-lost cousin.'

The face and dress and general appearance of this old gentleman indicated his profession. It was nautical.

'My tough old figure-head,' they all cried aloud together, 'tells you that I am a sailor, though retired. My clear, honest eyes tell you that I am a sailor. My red and weather-beaten cheek; my blue cloth; the shape

of my jacket—all proclaim that I am a sailor—and proud of it, sir, proud of it.'

Then Robert Burnikel, to my confusion, because I thought the custom, over a cup of tea, long exploded, pronounced a grace. It was an old family grace, dating from the time when all respectable families of the middle class were extremely religious, and the Church of England was evangelical, and when ladies conversed and wrote letters to each other, almost entirely on the condition of their souls. Quite a long collect, this grace was. Yet the utterance was as purely formal as that of grace in a College Hall, or grace in a workhouse, which is the most formal thing I know. Robert pronounced that grace mechanically.

This form of prayer concluded, we all sat down. A tremendous tea was on the table: ham in slices, boiled eggs, potted tongue, prawns, bread-and-butter, cakes of many kinds, including plum-cake, seed-cake, Madeira-cake, tea-cake (which is a buttered or bilious variety), short-cake, biscuits, jam, marmalade, and honey. A hospitable tea. A square tea, in fact. A tea, like Robert Burnikel himself, at once serious and earnest and heavy.

As a rule, I repeat, I take nothing with my afternoon tea. But one must not be churlish. My cousin glanced at me before the prayer, as if to say, 'You shall see for

yourself how Wapping can do it.' And I was expected to do justice to all these good things provided in my honour. Why, if this splendid spread was put on the table every day, the Captain's clear eye would become yellow, and the Master would find it no longer possible to follow out an argument, for the black spots, lines, and circles which would be bobbing about between his nose and the printed page. It must have been an exceptional spread. No one could live through a month of such teas. I avoided the ham, and escaped the eggs, and declined the shrimps. But I went in for the cakes, and on the whole acquitted myself, I believe, creditably. The Captain and the giver of the feast, on their parts, ploughed their way resolutely through the whole array of dishes. When the first pangs were appeased, the Captain spoke.

'Sir George Burnikel,' he said, with solemnity, 'I commanded the *Maid of Athens*, which ran between Calicut and Ceylon, for many years. As the captain of that noble vessel I've taken passengers abroad of the highest rank—the very highest—not to speak of coffee-planters. Not that their rank made them better sailors. I acknowledge so much. But it made me a respecter of the British aristocracy, Sir George Burnikel, of which you are a worthy member. Robert here is all for pulling down. Why? I ask you humbly, Sir George—why?'

Robert grunted.

'Why? I ask. When you break up an old ship she's gone. Don't break her up. Let her be. Let her go on till she's wrecked or cast away. No, sir, when you've carried noblemen upon the Indian Ocean, and found out that they are exactly like other people—must be stroked the right way; want the most comfortable berths; drink the same grog, and talk the same language—then you get to respect the aristocracy. Because, you see, with their chances, they might have been so very different. And then you ask, Why pull down? Why sweep away?' He addressed the question to Robert, who only grunted. It was obviously an old subject of dispute.

Then the Captain turned to the table again, and proceeded to work through the festive spread in silence.

The lagging of conversation enabled me to look about and observe. To observe in a strange house is to make discoveries. First, I regarded the girl at the tea-tray. She was rather pretty, I thought; too pale, as if she took too little exercise, or worked too hard, or was underfed; she had curiously soft and limpid eyes—of the kind which seem to hold within them unknown depths of something—wisdom, perhaps; love, perhaps; prophecy, perhaps—according to the lover's interpretation. Her features were regular, but not of classical outline; her cheek looked soft as velvet; her lips were

mobile. But she was too grave; she looked sad, even. I remembered what my cousin said: 'No fondling and nonsense.' At twenty-four one has not a large experience, but I certainly could not help thinking that she was a girl designed and intended by Nature to live upon love, and the fondlings and caresses and outward signs of love, which her *fiancé* thought so ridiculous. To have none! To wait for ten, twelve, fifteen years, and to lack that consolation and comfort! Poor child! Poor Isabel!

And then I made another discovery. The girl was afraid of her cousin—the Master—the man who would not permit his own mother to entertain any illusions about the mastery. She was afraid of her own *fiancé;* she watched him anxiously; she anticipated his wants in silence; he received her attentions without acknowledgment. Why was she afraid of him? Did he scold and abuse his secretary?

My host, I perceived, conducted his eating with the resolution and the rapidity that becomes habitual when one sits down to eat and not to talk. As I learned afterwards, there was little conversation at the table in this house, because the master was always full of his own thoughts, and despised the common topics of the day and the season. Perceiving, when he had himself finished a very substantial stop-gap between dinner and

supper, that his guest had also ceased taking in provisions, he rose abruptly, pushing back his chair and his plate. One may remark this thing done daily in the cottage and in the village. It is an action which seems to belong to a level lower than that of a master boat-builder. One might have expected more attention to style; but, as I learned afterwards, in a house where one man rules absolute, like Nero of Rome, and nobody dares to expostulate, some deterioration of manners is apt to creep in.

'Now,' he said, 'if you won't take any more tea-cake? a few shrimps? an egg? No? Then, we'll go and have another talk. Isabel, you needn't come in.'

The Captain took no notice of our departure. I bowed to the girl, who looked a little surprised at this act of courtesy, and rather stiffly inclined her head.

Outside the door Robert Burnikel stopped. 'Upstairs,' he said, 'I think there is something to interest you. Come along.' On the second-floor he threw open the door of a room. 'This,' he said, 'is called the spare-room. But I never remember that it was occupied. We could do without it, I suppose; and we never had any visitors to stay the night. So, you see, it is only half furnished.' The room contained a wooden bed with mattresses, but no feather-bed, or spring-bed, or curtains—only the frame; there were three or four

odd chairs standing about, and there was a great sailor's chest. 'This,' he explained, 'is the bed of old John Burnikel, the man who had the bag of diamonds.'

'Oh, it is a pity we haven't got the bag as well, isn't it? Did your great-grandfather buy it?'

'I suspect there was no buying. He was on the spot and he took it—bed and sea-chest and all. I suppose he thought that perhaps, in spite of their failures to find it, the bag might be somewhere about the bed.'

'And he searched, of course?'

'I believe this bed must have been taken to pieces a hundred times. My brother and I once took it to pieces and tapped every piece all over with a hammer to see if it was hollow. Look! Here is the secret cupboard in which people used to hide their things.' It was at the head of the bed. He pressed a certain spot in the woodwork and a door flew open, disclosing a small recess. 'Everybody knew the secret, but everybody pretended not to know. Of course, when the old man was gone, the first thing they did was to look into this secret cupboard. But there was nothing there. Then they turned the house inside out. Then they quarrelled and fought. Then they dissolved partnership.'

'And then,' I added, 'they accused each other, for

three generations after, of stealing that bag. It's a wonderful family story. Let me try.'

I put in my hand and felt round the little cupboard. There was nothing.

'And this,' my cousin went on, 'is the old man's sea-chest. That, too, was brought here at the same time as the bed. The two things, except for a table and a chair and a frying-pan, were all the furniture the old man possessed. It's a most marvellous thing to think of. What became of that bag? A hundred times and more that old bed has been pulled to pieces, and that old chest has been turned out, to see if there was any hiding-place still undiscovered.'

A large, iron-bound sea-chest. I threw open the lid. It seemed to contain a queer lot of useless rubbish.

'The sight of this box,' said Robert, 'makes one believe that there really must have been a bag of diamonds, after all.'

'Of course there was. The only thing is—what became of it? Nobody knew anything about it. Nobody was in the house from the time that the old man was taken ill until his nephews came; no outsider stole that bag. What became of it, then? Of course, it is no good asking now. Still, it is mysterious!'

'Yes. And about ninety years ago the two cousins

were standing over the dead man's bed, just as we are doing now. I feel as if it was yesterday.'

'Don't accuse me,' I said, 'of stealing the thing, or there will be another fight.'

Robert smiled grimly. Were there to be another fight, he was perfectly assured about the event. A very superior young man in every direction. I noted the smile and understood it. But it was all part of the very singular and masterful personality to which I was thus singularly introduced.

By this time I was fully impressed with the fact that I had to deal with a very remarkable, resolute, and ambitious young man, who cared about nothing in the world but his own advancement; strong and able, masterful, self-confident even to the very rare degree of communicating his secret ambitions. Most men, again, limit their ambitions by the circumstances and the conditions of their lives; they do not look much beyond. The ambition of the average working man is to get continuous work; sometimes to become a master; the ambition of the average young shopkeeper is to extend his business; the young solicitor hopes for a steady practice; the young author hopes for acceptance by the editor—only acceptance, only a chance; he has no thought at first of great world-wide success; his ambition increases as he gets on. In Robert's case the

ambition was from the outset full-grown. 'I will go into the House,' he said, being only a boat-builder with a small yard and a moderate business, 'and I will become a Cabinet Minister.' Such ambition was immense, presumptuous, audacious, considering his position. And yet, considering the man, apart from his position, I recognised almost from the outset that it was not ridiculous.

CHAPTER VII.

A BARGAIN.

Robert shut the study door carefully, as if to exclude any chance of being overheard. The room was growing dark now, save for the gas-lamp on the opposite side of the street. He pulled down the blind, lit a reading-lamp, which threw a little circle of bright light on the papers of the writing-table, and awakened reflections on the polished walls of cedar, luminous breadths which intensified the shadows between and below. The room felt ghostly. I took a chair outside the circle of light; my cousin took his own chair in his own place within the circle. Then an odd thing happened. Someone in the other room—of course it was Isabel—began to play. She played some soft music, a reverie, a song without words, a romance, a gentle, suggestive kind of music; it acted on me as a mesmeric influence; it is a weakness which always falls upon me when I hear soft music. It falls upon my brain, and I seem to see visions and dream

dreams. So while Isabel's fingers rambled over the notes, and her music fell soft and sweet upon the soul, it seemed as if I was only sitting again where I used to sit a long time ago, and that I had just been talking of the recent loss of those jewels with my cousin, whom I suspected of the theft. And I remembered the bedside watching and the death of old John Burnikel, and the search after those diamonds, and the deplorable quarrel with my cousin and the fight that followed. I say that I remembered all this as if I myself was present at these events. Then things got mixed. I had stolen these diamonds myself. By these, and as Judge, second Baronet and third Baronet, I succeeded in gaining more wealth and distinction. But—a very important thing—time was up. My cousin's turn was now to come.

A curious fancy—a whimsical dream. Yet it seized me and it held me. And it kept recurring. Time was up. We had had our turn. Now was the cousin's turn. My money was all gone; my position was gone. His was just about to begin.

'Well,' said the boat-builder, 'I have told you everything—all my ambitions—quite openly and freely. I have trusted you.'

'You have.'

'I trust a man, or I do not, by his face. That is

how I engage my men. A fellow comes to me. "Oh," I say, "you're one of a discontented lot; you are a Socialist Anarchist—divide-and-do-nothing sort." I know their faces. Or else I say: "You are a steady workman. You'll do for me." I'm never wrong. I'd take you on to-morrow over the way, with pleasure. That's why I trusted you.'

'All that you have said is in confidence, of course.'

'Isabel doesn't know, except that I mean to go ahead. Well, what you told me before tea is disturbing. All the same, I mean to go into the House as an Independent member. And I know the borough I shall choose. I shall stand for Shadwell, where they know me. As for the money that the election will cost—well, I can't very well afford it, that's certain, but I must plank it down. It will be an investment.'

'Very good.'

'Then tell me, is there anything I have forgotten? I want to stand at the next General Election. I want to begin nursing the borough at once.'

'Perhaps—there may be—one thing,' I replied, with hesitation.

'What thing? I have thought it all out. I can speak. I am not afraid. I can give and take. I know the institutions of the country and their history. I know the questions of the day and the actual facts

about them. I've got a memory like a well-ordered cupboard. What have I forgotten?'

'You are not the man I take you for if you are offended.'

'Nonsense, man! You can't offend me.' There are two or three ways of pronouncing the last four words. They may be so emphasized as to convey the highest compliment or the greatest contempt. Robert's way inclined to the latter. He expressed moderate contempt and self-satisfied superiority. A touchy man would have been offended. I am not a touchy man; and I took the reply—compliment or contempt—with a cheerful smile, wasted because unseen in the gloom of the room. I might as well have scowled.

'Well, then, you have forgotten one thing. That is —manners.'

'Manners!' In the bright light of his circle I saw his eyes flash and his cheek flame. It was as if the limit of patience had been reached. 'Manners?' he repeated. 'You mean that I don't know how to behave. I'd have you learn, then, that we behave as well at Wapping as Piccadilly.'

I have since learned that there is no social level where the charge of bad manners would not be resented. It is a beautiful thing to reflect that, however low down one may penetrate, always there is a code of manners,

an ideal, a standard, and resentment of the deepest if one is charged with shortcomings in respect to that code. Robert snorted with indignation. For a moment I feared that I had mortally offended him. So I hastened to bring along what the Persian poet calls the Watering-pot of Conciliation.

'One moment. I mean this: You have set before yourself a definite end. Your design is to become a power in the House. You cannot afford, therefore, as you very well understand, to neglect any means of attaining this end. Now, a power in the House must mean in some sense or other a man of Society. Not to know the ways and usages of Society would be the greatest possible hindrance to you. I know of one man now in the House who will never rise, simply because he is a rank social outsider; he can neither dress, nor talk, nor carry himself, like a gentleman. Tell me, for instance, do you possess that simple article, indispensable for society—the common dress-coat?'

'No; I've got an office coat and a house coat and a Sunday coat. What the Devil more does a man want?'

'Nothing more, really. But we are artificial. Have you, next, ever been to an evening dinner-party?'

'We dine at one o'clock every day—the good old time. There are no evening dinner-parties here.'

'It is the good old time, no doubt. Still we are, as I said, artificial, and Society dines in the evening. Now, as to a reception or a ball, or anything of that sort——'

'Oh!' Robert groaned. 'What has this kind of thing got to do with me?'

'And as to the common language of Society, and as to such simple matters as the Art and Literature and Drama of the social world——'

'What has all this got to do with the business?'

'A great deal. My ambitious cousin, knowledge of all your subjects will not advance you by yourself. Even oratory will not advance you by itself. You must make yourself a *persona grata;* you must become one of the world; you must dress, talk, act, behave in their way, not in yours. Mind, you must.'

My cousin groaned again.

'For instance, part of manners is the art of suppressing yourself. You must learn how to conceal your aims, or, at least, not to put them forward at the wrong time. You must learn to show a less serious front.'

'Learn to pretend—that's what your fine manners mean.'

'Learn to assume a side of smiles and light talk—and, perhaps, of lighter epigram. You must be able to laugh at things. Do you know that a man who can

laugh has ten times greater chance than a man who is always in earnest? You will cultivate, my cousin, if you are wise, the manners, talk, ways, customs, and usages of society, before, not after, you go into the House. Believe me, if you are to rise, as seems likely, you will have to learn these things somehow, and you had better learn them quietly and at leisure before you go in.'

My cousin banged the table with his fist. 'Good Lord!' he cried. 'First you tell me that I must join a party and make myself a slave, and lie, and wriggle, and cringe, and fetch, and carry, and say, and do what I am told. Do you think I would enter the House on such conditions? Never!'

'As you please.'

'And now you tell me, in addition, that I must learn the niminy-piminy, trumpery pretences that you call manners. Well, I won t. You may have your manners, and I will keep mine.'

'Then you will fail. Understand me, cousin. This is not a question of Piccadilly ways. It is one of taking your place with the members as their equal, from the outset. This is of the greatest importance to you. There are many men of your station originally, that is, who have sprung from the trading class, in the House. Some of them entered it with the same ambitions which

guide you. Those of them who have got on have all managed to acquire, at the University or elsewhere, the manners of gentlemen. So must you. At present—I speak freely—your manners are only those of a superior working man. You have lived alone in this corner, and you have forgotten the need of manners. I say that you *must* learn our manners. You must! You must!'

You will observe that I was at this time greatly struck with the man's ability as well as his courage. A smaller man one would have suffered to make his way as he could, sink or swim, probably the former, from sheer ignorance of manners. But this man conquered me. I had never before met with any man who knew so much and spoke so well, and at the same time had such an excellent opinion of himself. Conceit and vanity we have with us always; they are given by kindly Providence to make up for incompetence. But that an able man should be so avowedly self-reliant is rare. I thought that the man himself justified my plain speaking.

He was staggered. 'You can't make me a lardy-dardy fine gentleman,' he objected weakly.

'There is no such thing nowadays. The young fellows are all athletes. I don't want to make you a man of fashion or a man about town. Nothing of the sort. I want to make you a well-bred, quiet man, able

to hold your own. You are built for the part; you look the part; I want to put you on a glove of velvet to hide your wrist of iron. Do you understand that?'

The prospect of hiding his wrist of iron pleased the man who desired strength above all things. The use of the velvet, and how this choice fabric lends itself to ambitious purposes, he did not, as yet, understand.

'Well,' he said unwillingly. 'You may be right. Perhaps there is something in it. But if there is, I am too old to learn. Manners can't be taught. There was no school for manners.'

I got up. 'Before I go, Cousin Robert, I have something to tell you. All the confidences shall not be yours.'

'Something to tell me?' Robert looked up, but there was a discouraging want of interest in his eye, and an intimation, conveyed by his manner, that he was thinking about himself, and was not at all interested in my confidences.

'It is not a very long confidence. Not a tenth part so long as yours.'

'That's good,' said my cousin. 'Cut along.'

'Well, it is only this. You called upon me, you have talked to me, in the belief that I am rich.'

'A quarter of a million of money the Judge left behind him.'

'He did. But it is all gone. My father was unfortunate in certain transactions. He lost it all. I only found it out—found out, that is, the whole truth —yesterday, the day you called upon me.'

'What! Lost your fortune? What are you going to do now?'

'That I don't know yet. Perhaps you may be able to help me. On the other hand, I may be able to help you.'

'Have you got nothing?'

'Two or three thousand only.'

'Oh, he calls three thousand nothing! If I had as much! Well, what would you like to do best?'

'Frankly, I don't know. I have learned nothing except the use of a lathe and carpentering tools.'

'You ought to be a boat-builder by rights.'

'I believe I ought. Well, Robert—I may call you by your Christian name—you shall put me on to something or other. And as for me, I can introduce you at least to some pleasant people.'

'I want useful people.'

'They may be useful as well. You shall help me, and I will help you. Is that a bargain?'

Robert hesitated. Every business man looks upon a bargain from all points of view, and especially to see how it will benefit himself. He made up his mind,

apparently, that the bargain was in his favour, for he stretched out his arm. 'Hands upon it, cousin.'

At that moment—it was a happy omen—Isabel's music burst into a glad triumphal march.

Then I wished him good-night. 'We will talk further upon the point of manners,' I said; 'perhaps something may be done; meantime, don't take any steps yourself.'

'If I was to buy "The Etiquette of the Ballroom" now?' he suggested anxiously; 'there's one in a shop window at Poplar.'

'My dear fellow, you want no guide but your own experience, and that you must get somehow. Let me think a bit.'

So we parted, and I went home, thinking of nothing but this most remarkable person. Surely it would not be difficult to give him just that little knowledge of society which would prevent him from being *gauche* and ill at ease. Could I not myself take him in hand? I had all the time there is, and one cannot be thinking about one's own future arrangements all day long. Suppose — suppose — suppose. And at this moment—I remember well the exact moment; it was striking nine o'clock in the club smoking-room—an inspiration fell upon me. Other people, including Frances, have called it a moment of madness, demoniac

possession, the extremity of folly; but for my own part I call it an inspiration. Every such suggestion, just as every dream, may be traced to some external event. This suggestion, I am sure, was due to my having seen the old wooden bed and the sailor's chest. That made me realize the boat-building ancestors; that gave me the strange feeling of having enjoyed the diamonds for long enough, so that it was now my cousin's turn, and this suggested what I call an inspiration. It fell in with the new necessity for making a livelihood, with the disgust which I entertained for all the methods already proposed. I gave the thing consideration; went to bed with it; wrestled with it; got up with it; got into the bath with it; dressed with it; breakfasted with it. After breakfast I sat down for what they call calm reflection. This was the inspiration. Why should I not become a boat-builder? An honest craft is better than the tricks and wrigglings necessary in any other line of life that appeared open to me. You have seen what they were. If you think of it, the only possible way for a penniless man without a profession to get on and make money or keep himself must be a way of wriggling. I should in this way learn a trade and make myself a craftsman—a Master Craftsman, like my cousin. As for any indignity in learning a trade, I never felt any, and I am not going to

allow at this time of day that there is any. Quite the contrary. If every lad learned a trade, a good many would be saved from going into the wrong line. I revolved the thing in my mind all that morning. Then I took paper and pen, and, like Robinson Crusoe, set things out plainly, pro and con. As, for instance, only to put down a few of the pros and cons.

Pro: I had lost my fortune and must change my mode of living altogether.

Con: But there was no need for me to give up my social position.

Pro: I had still enough left to start life in some trade or craft.

Con: But I knew no trade.

Pro: I had a special aptitude for cutting, and carving, and shaping, and making.

Con: But I should lose caste by going into trade.

Pro: But what if I did? You cannot keep caste without money.

And so on, with a special leaning to the pros, because my mind was already made up. I would be a boat-builder.

So at last I sat down and wrote two letters — the first to my cousin Robert, and the second to Frances.

This was the first—the important epoch-making letter:

'My dear Cousin,

'I have been turning over in my mind the difficulty in which we were stuck when I left you yesterday, and I have a curious proposal to make to you. It is this: You shall take me into your yard and teach me the trade or craft of boat-building—all about it: making, selling, wages, prices, materials, everything. Perhaps in twelve months or so I may be master of the subject. You will do this for nothing.

'I, for my part, after the day's work, will take you home with me—to my chambers. And for five nights out of the week I will arrange something or other that will give you that kind of experience of which we spoke.

'If this arrangement pleases you, send me a telegram.'

I despatched this missive by postal messenger, and before noon received the reply: 'Yes; come to-morrow.'

My other note was to Frances—a diplomatic note. I thought it better for the time to avoid her. Perhaps one knew beforehand the views—somewhat narrow and even prejudiced—which she would take about the craft of building boats.

'My dear Frances,' I said,

'You will be interested in hearing that I have decided on my future career. It will lack public

splendour, and it will be wholly without distinction. So far you will not approve of it. Since, however, you know how deplorably free from ambition I am, you will not be disappointed. As soon as I have settled down in my new work I will call upon you and report progress; that is, if you will receive a man who will not any longer call himself a gentleman, but a craftsman.

'Always, my dear Frances,

'Yours affectionately,

'G. B.'

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE YARD.

That was how it began. We entered upon this exchange without understanding what was to follow—who ever understands what is to follow? If we were to understand what is to follow, nobody would do anything, because whatever follows is sure to contain the drop of bitterness, or incompleteness, or the unlooked-for evil that goes with everything. We were, in fact, without knowing it, preparing for an exchange. As you shall see, the bargain meant that Robert was to take my place, and I was to take his. But as yet, I say, we suspected nothing of this.

In the morning I presented myself in the guise of a working man; that is to say, I put on a fishing costume of tweeds. Perhaps, as a working man, I ought not to have taken a hansom; but, of course, one is not correct all at once in every detail.

Robert came out of the box he called an office.

'Humph!' he said doubtfully, 'didn't expect you; thought you'd think better of it.'

'I have thought better of it—much better of it.'

He considered a little. 'If you really mean business,' he said. 'Of course you can't learn the thing in twelve months. I was apprenticed for seven years. Still, if you are sharp and handy, and have got the courage to stick at it, you can learn a good bit in that time. Well, and about that—that other proposal.' He looked round, as if afraid that his men would hear. Why, if anybody knew that he—he, the Master—was going to the West End to learn manners, the laughter and the scorn of it would be inextinguishable.

'That stands, too,' I replied.

He laughed and called his foreman, and we had a little serious conversation.

The amateur who stands at a lathe can knock off when he likes; if his fingers get tired he rests; he takes a cigarette; he sits down for a bit; he goes on again when he feels like going on again. The working man, on the other hand, cannot knock off; he must go on; he learns very early the lesson that he must not get tired—or if he does get tired that he must work on all the same; if he gets hot he must go on getting hotter. All this he learns as a boy, and I should think it must take half his apprenticeship to learn it.

'How do you like it?' Robert asked grimly an hour afterwards.

I confess that I was enduring acute pains in the right arm, heavy pains in the left arm, dull pains in both legs, and grievous pains in the back; that my brow was like that of the village blacksmith at his best, and that I went on doggedly only because the other fellows, my companions, my brother chips, were going on steadily, as if there was no such thing as bodily suffering.

'It isn't quite like a fancy lathe, is it?'

I straightened myself painfully, and laid down the tool.

'You'll get tired of it in a day.'

'I shall not allow myself to get tired of it. Let me learn how to build a boat.'

'Have your own way. If you do stick to the work, I shall think all the better of you. No one knows how to take you, with your light touch-and-go talk, as if all the world was made to be laughed at.'

'I now understand that only a very small proportion of the world is permitted to laugh. Henceforth I am as serious as'—I looked round the yard—'as serious as your workmen.' They did look serious, perhaps on account of the artistic responsibility of their craft. 'In plain words, my cousin, don't let us talk of any lack of

seriousness. I am next door to a pauper, and I am going to be a builder of boats—Burnikel boats—like my great-grandfather.'

'You shall try, then. I will teach you all I can. But sit down a bit; there's no need to break your back over the job. There's other things in the trade besides the actual work. This isn't a bad trade as things go; but no trade is altogether what the parsons call Christian, and that's what you will have to learn.'

'Must there be tricks in everything?'

'Well, money-making means besting your neighbour. Of course you know nothing about the way in which money is made. You think it just grows.'

'So it does, if you let it alone. It grows luxuriantly. If you spend it, of course it can't grow.'

'But you've got to make it first. There's a great fight—a deadly fight—always going on between us all. The masters want to starve the men; the men want to choke the masters; the buyers and the sellers cheat and lie, and coax and wheedle, all the time. You'll have to join in that struggle, and, mind, it goes on for ever. There never will be any end to this fight; it's the everlasting struggle for existence. There are five millions in this big place—one million of grown men. All but a mere handful are in the fight. Not that many are of much account.'

'I believe I can fight as well as most. At all events, I shall try.'

'It's a kind of fight that you've never learned; that's what I mean, and you won't like it. First of all, you've got to put your pride in your pocket. Do you understand what that means? You've got to be civil to men that you'd like to kick. What do you think of that?'

'That's nothing at all—common politeness. I am every day civil to men whom I ardently desire to kick.'

'You think that all you have to do is to make good boats. Man, you've got to use your shoulders and to push and shove in order even to keep your connection together. How will you like that?'

'It's much the same higher up. No one can escape the common lot. I shall try to push forward. My shoulders, you may observe, are nearly as broad as your own.'

'Then you've got to fight for your prices, to seem yielding, and to fight hard, and to be hail-fellow-well-met with every man that may want to buy a boat; vermin, some of them—vermin and creeping and crawling things. Friendly with them. How will you like that?'

'One is bound everywhere to politeness with the man of the moment. We all do it.'

'You've got to best your man, or he'll best you. How will you like that?'

'Besting your neighbour may be conducted so as to become an intellectual game.'

'And you must call it good business, not over-reaching, when you succeed.'

'My cousin, you fill me with enthusiasm. Let us go on.'

'Go on, then, and good luck to you!'

Thus was the apprentice placed in the hands of the foreman, and practical instruction was commenced. Like Czar Peter at Deptford, which was just across the river, I began to work with my own hands. Well, I had in me, to begin with, the makings of a good workman: hand and eye, and the command of tools, which go with the good workman.

At half-past twelve we knocked off for dinner. Quite ready I was to knock off. I walked across the street with my cousin and joined in the early dinner, which was served at one. We had, I remember, stalled ox and humming ale, and a ginger pudding.

'Going to learn how to build a boat, are you?' said the Captain. 'Ha! you couldn't learn a more useful thing nor a prettier thing. A boat's about the loveliest thing a man can make. Every kind of boat—a man-o'-

war's launch or a little up-river cedar and putty skiff—the loveliest thing it is. And what in the world is there more useful? As for you, sir, a Burnikel, even if he is a nobleman, ought to take to boat-building by nature.'

'I am taking to it by nature, Captain. I feel as if I have already learned half the business. I shall be Burnikel the Great, or Burnikel the Incomparable, Prince of Boat-builders.'

Robert took his dinner, as he had taken his tea—in silence. It was the custom, I perceived. Isabel carved, at which one marvelled. I observed that she carved well. When she was not carving, she sat at the table, pale and silent, watching Robert, her task-master and her ice-cold lover. She took very little dinner—much less than a girl of her age ought to take. She looked as if she had no other interest in life than just to satisfy her master. As for youth and life and cheerfulness, these things did not appear to exist in the house. Yet Robert was only twenty-six—two years older than myself—and Isabel was not yet twenty-two.

Dinner over, the Captain returned to his own den at the back, whence presently proceeded the smell of tobacco. I believe that he also solaced himself after dinner with a glass of something warm with a slice of lemon in it. Robert, observing that he always went

over the way at two, retired into his study. He was one of those unfortunate men who never waste their time. We all know the kind; they use up every odd ten minutes. Robert worked from dinner, which was over about twenty minutes past one, till two every day. Most men waste the hour after dinner. To Robert it meant simply two hundred hours, or about twenty-five days, at eight hours a day, every year. Such industry is too much for the average man. For my own part, I like to think of stealing twenty-five days for pleasure and laziness, rather than of adding twenty-five to the tale of working days—already too many.

Isabel, as soon as the cloth was cleared, spread out her account-books and began to work.

'Is it good,' I said, 'to work directly after dinner?'

'I do not know. Robert always works after dinner.' I observed that she had a very sweet voice, soft and musical.

'Robert is a strong man. You are not a strong man. May I use the privilege of a cousin—you are to be my cousin some time—to point out to you that many things which Robert may do with impunity you must not even attempt to do?'

'The work has got to be done, and I cannot ask whether this time or that time is best.'

'Why not play a little after dinner.? You play very well.'

'I never play during working hours. Robert would not like it.'

'Then——'

'Please, Sir George, allow me to go on with my work.'

I said no more, but stood at the window and watched her. She had a head of comely shape, and her features were good; but why so sad? why so pale? why so silent?

Presently I went back to more aching shoulders and tired wrists, envying the workmen, who never wanted to straighten their backs, and whose wrists seemed made of iron. That is the way with all manual work. The artist works away with his colours; all day long his hand is in his work—his wonderful work. But his fingers and his wrist never get tired. The navvy goes on digging away, with rounded back and unwearied arms, as if there was no exertion required for his work, and no weight in a shovel full of clay. Our men worked on as if there was no weariness possible with a plane or a hammer. But the amateur leaves off and sits down, and has a whiff of tobacco, and a drink, and a talk for half an hour or so before he goes on again. And this is the real reason why amateur work is never so

good as professional work is, that the amateur can leave off when he feels fatigued, while the professional must keep on.

The foreman stood over me. 'You're handy with the tools,' he said.

In fact, he had nothing to teach me in that way. What I had to learn was not the execution of the work, but the design of the work; that first, and the other part—the trading part—afterwards.

I worked like the rest—without a coat and with sleeves turned up; but I deny the apron. In the last century every working man wore an apron, and every serving-man in a shop wore an apron. Now we have left off that badge of trade or servitude. On the whole, I think that I am glad that I never wore an apron. I kept my working clothes in the house, and changed them in the morning and for dinner; and I declare that, as I grew to understand how a boat was built, how her lines were laid down, how her skeleton was put together, how her ribs were clothed, and how she was finished and fitted, a noble enthusiasm—the family enthusiasm—seized upon me, and I felt that true happiness lay not in ambition, which in Robert's case I regarded with pity; not in wealth, taking my own case as an example; but in the building of boats.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE EVENING.

In the evening the other part of the bargain began.

'My turn now,' I said. 'If I can only get this aching out of my shoulders. I am now going to be your coach —a judicious coach. The first point I am told that a judicious coach observes is never to teach more than is wanted. And the next thing is to rub in what he does teach—to rub it in by incessant repetition.'

'It will be labour thrown away,' he grumbled. 'You will never make a fine gentleman of me.'

'My dear cousin, I am not going to try. I am, however, going to make of you a man acquainted with, and accustomed to, the usages of society. You are to belong to the world of society, not of fashion. The House of Commons has still a large majority of men who belong to that world. A knowledge of these habits, I have already told you, is absolutely indispensable.'

'Oh! Very good, then, I am ready.' But he was

not eager; he was rather glum about the work in hand.

'Yes, but you must be more than ready. You must be as eager to learn this branch of knowledge as any other. Don't grumble over it—like an unwilling schoolboy.'

'Look here, Sir George——'

'Don't call me Sir George, to begin with. You are my cousin. Call me George, and I shall call you Robert.'

'Very well. I confess I don't like it. How would you like to be told that you don't know manners? Hang it! the thing sticks——'

'Let us say, then, the manners of the West End. Don't let it stick, old man. Now listen. First of all you must have dress clothes, and you must put them on every evening.'

'What the devil does a man want with dress clothes?'

'I will tell you when I have time. Meanwhile, you must have them. The next thing is that, from the moment you leave Wapping till you get home again, you are not to speak one word concerning your projects, or your ambitions, or your opinions.'

'I don't mind that condition. No one but yourself does know my ambitions.'

'Very well, then, that's settled so far. Now let us sit down and consider my scheme.' We had reached my chambers, and we were in the study where the lathe was. 'I have been making out a little skeleton scheme —in my head.'

'Let us hear it.' We sat down solemnly opposite each other to discuss this question seriously.

'What do we want? To make you a man of the world. Some things you won't want to learn—whist, billiards, lawn tennis, dancing——'

'No,' he grinned, 'not billiards or dancing—or betting or gambling.'

'The first thing, the most important thing, is to get the dinner arrangements right. With this view we will begin with a course of restaurants. I don't say that one meets with the very finest manners possible at a restaurant, but, still, the people who go there have at least got a veneer; they understand the elements. I need not tell you much. You will look about you and observe things, and compare and teach yourself.'

'Well? We are to waste time and money over a needless and expensive late dinner, are we? And all because there's a way of holding a fork.'

'It is part of the programme. After a while I shall take you to the theatre, which is sometimes a very good

school of manners, and there you will see on and off the stage ladies in their evening splendour.'

'Jezebels—painted Jezebels.'

'Not all of them. A few, perhaps, here and there. Later on you will be able to distinguish Jezebel. But it is best not to think about this lady. Remember that a well-dressed woman has never come within your experience, and it is time for you to make her acquaintance. After a week or two of restaurants I will take you to a club, and introduce you to some of our fellows. You can sit quiet at first and listen. Their talk is not exactly intellectual, but it shows a way of looking at things.'

'I know. Like you talk. Just as if nothing mattered, and everything was all right and as it should be.'

'Not dogmatic nor downright. Not as if we were going to fight to the death for our opinions.'

'If the opinion is worth having, it is worth defending. You ought to fight for it.'

'My dear cousin, formerly opinions were distinct and clearly outlined. Nowadays there is so much to be said on the other side that all opinions have grown hazy and blurred. For instance, you want, perhaps, to pull down the House of Lords.'

'No, I don't. I want to reform the House.'

'Well, if you did you would be astonished to learn what a lot can be said for the Peers, and how extremely dangerous it would be to pull down their House, because the House of Commons leans against it, and all the houses in the country lean upon the House of Commons. When you have grasped that fact, where is the clearness of your opinion? Gone, sir—gone.'

'You think that you will change me completely, then.'

'Not quite completely. Only in certain points. I shall try to graft upon you the manner of a finished gentleman. No one could possibly look the part better. You might be an Earl to look at. Of course, the garb will have to be reconsidered—those boots, for instance.' Robert looked quickly at mine as compared with his own, and blushed. He blushed at his own boots. This was a note of progress. 'But all in good time. You shall not present yourself in a drawing-room until you can enter it, and stand in it, and talk in it, as if you belonged to the world of drawing-rooms.'

Robert entered upon his part of his education with much the same enthusiasm as is shown by a dog of intelligence going off to be washed. It has to be done; he knows that; and he goes, but unwillingly. Nobody has any conception of the numberless little points in which Wapping may differ from Piccadilly. Wapping,

you see, has so long been cut off from external influences. The influence of the clergy, beneficent in other respects, is not felt at the Wapping dinner-table. And the Burnikels, by the retirement of the other old families, the aristocracy of the quarter, have remained almost the only substantial people of the place. Therefore, for a great many years they lived alone; and their manners, as a natural consequence, continued to be much the same as the manners of their forefathers.

Take, for instance, the ordinary dinner-napkin. It is astonishing to note how many mistakes may be made with a simple dinner-napkin, when a man takes one in hand for the first time. There were no dinner-napkins at Wapping. There had been, many years ago, but they went out when forks came in. That is to say, so far as the children were concerned, just about two hundred years ago. The right handling of the dinner-napkin can only be acquired by custom. So also with wine and wineglasses. If you are perfectly ignorant of wine, except that the black kind is port, and the straw colour means sherry, and that either kind, but especially the former, may be exhibited on Sunday, you become bewildered with the amount of wine lore that one is supposed to know.

'You are getting on,' I remarked, after six weeks of almost heart-breaking work, because—I repeat that one

would never believe that isolation could make such a difference—everything had to be learned. This young man was steeped in the things he had learned from books—political economy, history, sociology, philosophy, trade questions, practical questions—he was a most learned person, but of the things of which men talk, or men and women talk, he knew nothing—absolutely nothing. Art, poetry, fiction, the theatre, sport, games, things personal—which take up so large a share in the daily talk—on all these things he was mute. He came to the club with me, and sat perfectly silent; disdainful at first, but presently angry with himself for not being able to take a part, and with the fellows for talking on subjects so trifling.

'I'm a rank outsider,' he said. 'I heard one of them call me a rank outsider. Thought I couldn't hear him. If he'd said it in the street, I'd have laid him in the gutter. A rank outsider. Do you think, George, that you will ever make me anything else?'

'What does it matter if you are a rank outsider in some things? Patience, and let us go on.'

At first he grumbled; he could see no use in trifles, such as ceremonials of society. We have simplified these of late years; still, some forms remain.

'You will want to be received,' I told him, 'as a man

of culture. These are the outward and visible forms of culture.'

He listened and reflected. Presently I observed that he took greater interest in things—he was realizing what things meant. Finally, the recognition of things arrived quite suddenly. Then he grumbled no longer. He looked about him, interested and amused. He sat out plays, and talked about the life pictured—a very queer sort of life it is, for the most part. As for the acting, he accepted the finest acting as part of the play, without comment. He was like an intelligent traveller—he wanted to know what it all meant, the complex civilization of this realm; where the Court comes in; what part is played in the daily life by the noble Lords, whose House he was so anxious to improve for them, feeling quite capable of adjusting reforms and bringing the Peers up-to-date by himself alone and unaided; how the Church affects society; what are the powers and the limitations of money; what is the real influence of the Press; what is the position of the professions. He wanted to know everything. As for me, I had never before asked myself any of these questions, being quite satisfied with the little narrow world that surrounded me.

I tried to interest him in Art. It was impossible. He said that he would rather look at a tree than the

picture of a tree. I tried him with fiction. He said that the world of reality was a great deal more interesting than the world of imagination. I tried him with poetry. He said that, if a thing had to be said, it was best said plainly, in prose.

He wanted to survey the whole world, and to understand the whole world. When one assumes the attitude of an impartial inquirer, and learns what can be said on the other side, the Radical disappears and the Reformer succeeds. There is, of course, the danger, if one inquires too long, and with more than a certain amount of sympathy, that the Reformer himself may vanish, leaving the Philosopher behind. Or, perhaps, Radical, Reformer and Philosopher may all live together in the same brain.

Robert was passing into the second stage. He snorted at things no longer; he rather walked round them, examined them, and inquired how they came.

'I confess,' he said, 'that I was ignorant when I came here. My knowledge was of books. Men and women I did not take into account. It is worth all the trouble of learning your confounded manners only to have found out the men and women.'

This was the Reformer.

'The people at this end of the town,' he continued, 'are interesting, partly because they have got the best

of everything, and partly because they think themselves so important. They are not really important. The people who do nothing can never be important. The only important person is the man who makes and produces.'

Here was the Radical.

'You live in a little corner of the world; you are all living on the labour of others; you are beautifully behaved; you are, generally, I think, amiable; you look so fine and talk so well that we forget that you've no business to exist. It is a pleasure only to watch you. And you take all the luxuries, just as if they naturally belonged to you. I like it, George. I am a rank outsider, but I like it.'

This was the Philosopher.

'And what about the House?'

'Oh! I've begun to nurse my borough. I address the men every Sunday evening in a music-hall. You may come and hear me, if you like.'

'What is your borough?'

'Shadwell, close by, where they know me and the boat-yard. The men come in crowds. Man! There is no doubt! They come, I say, in crowds. They fill the place; and mind you, I can move the people.'

'Good. If you can only move the House as well!'

'These fellows will carry me through. I'm sure of

it. They are the pick of the working man—Socialists, half of them—chaps, mind you, with a sense of justice.'

Here we had the Radical still.

'That means getting a larger share for themselves, doesn't it?'

'Sometimes. Motives are mixed. Well, I'm going to be Member for Shadwell—Independent Member. A General Election may at any moment be sprung upon us. And Lord! Lord! if I had gone into the House as I was six weeks ago!'

'Patience, my cousin; we have not quite finished yet. There's one influence wanting yet before you are turned out, rounded off, and finished up. Only one thing wanting, but a big thing. No, I will tell you, later on, what that is.'

CHAPTER X.

THE CHURCHYARD.

I pass over as irrelevant, or at least superfluous, the very disagreeable interview in which I revealed my plans to Frances. She had found a new opening for me—I was to be appointed Commissioner for Tobago, or President of Turk's Island, or Lieutenant-Governor of the Gold Coast; she could obtain the post for me; it was an excellent opening; I was to spend two or three years in the endeavour to escape fever, and five or six years of sick-leave at intervals. I should then have a clear claim to the gratitude of the Colonial Office, and should be appointed Governor of some colony with a salary of many thousands. What more could any man desire?

Nothing, truly. And, as Frances observed, no creeping; no wriggling; no backstairs; also there is no examination for these appointments. And they are obtained in the good old way, by interest alone.

Why not, then, accept? Because, unfortunately, I was now a craftsman, and I really desired no other kind of life.

It was then that Frances spoke with conviction of demoniac possession—I never before thought she believed in it—and of the extreme madness which sometimes seizes on men; of the follies unspeakable which they commit. She was very angry—very angry indeed. She also declared her disgustful surprise at the bad, low, grovelling taste which made it possible for me to leave the ranks of gentlehood, and to go down—down—down—to live among beery, tobacco-smoking, ill-bred, uncultivated boors and bourgeois. She displayed on this subject quite an unexpected flow of language and command of adjectives. To be sure, I had never seen her in a real rage before. And she looked very handsome indeed, marching about the room with flushed cheeks and angry eyes, while she declaimed and denounced and lamented. I never admired her so much. She became so entirely unexpected that I very nearly fell in love with her.

When she had quite finished by throwing such words as 'insensate,' 'clod,' and 'stock and stone,' at my head, and by saying that she had now done with me for ever; and when she had thrown herself into a chair, and had held her handkerchief to her eyes—I had never

seen her cry before, and, indeed, it was so unexpected that I very nearly, as I said before—and when I had said a few brotherly words, and uttered a few assurances—and when we had shaken hands again—I kissed her hand if I remember aright—we sat down opposite to each other, and close together, and had a pleasant talk quite in the old style, though it was understood that I was henceforth only a plain boat-builder.

It was then that I told her first about my cousin. She listened without much interest. The man was a mere tradesman.

'You want a recruit, Frances, for the Party? Of course you do. Well, then, I tell you that you could not do better than look after this man.'

'A man's a man, of course; otherwise, George, the working men members do not always turn out worth much. Still, there are one or two—and—well, tell me more about this man.'

'He is not exactly a working man. He is, like myself, a Master Craftsman.'

'Oh!' She shrugged her shoulders impatiently. Such distinctions she knew not. And then I told her about his attainments, and his boundless ambitions, and everything, till at last I succeeded in making her believe that here really was a man who might be worth considering—the only fault which Frances possessed

was that she underrated the powers of everybody outside a certain circle. I told her about Robert at first, I believe, in order to divert her mind from the distressing spectacle of my decline and fall, and next in order to show her that we were not all beery boors and bourgeois at Wapping-on-the-Wall, and, lastly, it came into my head, that if she should peradventure take an interest in his Parliamentary career it might be very useful to him.

After a bit she began to understand a little. Her imagination was at last fired by the picture of this young man resolving, while yet a boy, on entering the House of Commons, and learning to speak at a sham Parliament; working at home on history, politics, social economy, all the questions of the day; reading Mill, Herbert Spencer, Darwin, Huxley, Lecky, Froude, Freeman, Green, and Seeley, and all the rest of them; becoming a learned man; denying himself the joys of youth—all for the sake of his ambition; and all the time remaining strong and masterful as one born to command. Because I am a dull person in narrative, or because she was prejudiced generally against trade, it was a long time before I succeeded in awakening her interest in the man. 'Do you know,' she said at last, 'that you seem to have got a very remarkable creature down there! Of course I cannot really believe that he

will ever come to anything. A man living all by himself, and ignorant of all the world outside his trade, cannot come to any good. In the House one must know men, not books only.'

'I wonder if you would like to hear him speak. He speaks every Sunday evening. If you like we will go.'

So it was arranged. Frances would like to see the kind of people who formed that constituency; she would like to hear the kind of speech that pleased them; she would go, subject to one condition, that she was not to see the Boat-Yard. 'I could not, George,' she said. 'It is bad enough that you should descend into that horrid place—when you might become a Colonial Governor. I could not actually see the chips and shavings. Oh, George! you are very wilful—but I must always forgive you. Yes, I will go with you to see this wonderful person of Wapping. You only try to excuse your abominable alacrity in sinking by pretending that you have got a prophet down there.'

So I came away forgiven and reconciled, but for ever fallen in her esteem, and I returned to my riverside work with greater heart now that the worst was over.

It was natural that one should take an interest in the people of the place—especially in those of the house. I spent every day an hour—the dinner-hour—with Robert's household. Sometimes, too, another half-hour

over a cup of tea. Therefore, of course, one thought a good deal about the people. The Captain I found an honest, hearty old fellow, who liked his meals, took a cheerful glass after his dinner and supper, and slept away most of the remaining time. He had a room at the back called the Captain's cabin, where there was a narrow bed and an easy-chair; a hob with a kettle; a table with a tobacco-jar and other conveniences. There I sometimes visited him and heard experiences.

But the person of real interest was Isabel. I thought her, at first, inanimate, and perhaps stupid. I discovered, first, that she had a very beautiful head—the poets do not seem to understand the charm of a well-shaped head—but it was nearly always drooping. Then I observed that her hair was quite wonderful—there was such a lot of it, and it was of such a lovely light colour, looking as if it held the sunshine even in that dark 'parlour.' It was, however, only rolled up without any coquettish display—was the girl quite ignorant of her charms? Her eyes were generally down-drooped as in shyness or humility—once she lifted them with some strange wonder because I made some frivolous remark—there was never any frivolity about this house before I went into it. They were large and limpid eyes, of a deep blue, like the dark blue of a pansy. And then I discovered that her features were straight

and regular, and that, though her cheek was pale, and her manner was listless and drooping, the girl was full of beauty in face, and head, and figure. And Robert, like a thing of wood, had no eyes for the loveliness that was his by engagement! Wonderful!

I could never get the girl to talk to me. She sat at table, carving in silence, or pouring out the tea in silence. When it was over, she spread out her books and began to work again. And week after week passed by. I was an old shipmate with the Captain; I was on the most confidential terms, as you have seen, with Robert; but Isabel remained a stranger.

Then the opportunity came.

It was a Saturday afternoon. I had been spending an hour after dinner talking with the Captain in his den. Then, as he showed signs of going to sleep, I left him and bent my steps westward. It was a bright, sunny afternoon in May. The street was deserted; the warehouses were shut up; the sunshine increased, but set off, the dreariness of the tall places on either side.

I came to the mouth of the Dock. As once before, the gates were open for the passing of a ship, and I had to wait. I leaned against the rail and watched. On the right was the Dock, with the masts of the ships; on the left was the river. I looked at the river and looked at the Dock. Then I became aware of a most un-

expected fact: on the right hand, besides the Dock, there were trees—green trees. 'Anything green in Wapping?' I asked. 'Trees and green leaves! Do they grow out of the water?'

I then perceived that there was a street leading north; I thought that there was nothing north of the High Street except the Dock. I was mistaken. At the corner was a substantial modern house—the vestry house of the parish—with its brass plate and clean windows. Next I observed a lovely eighteenth-century house—sober, square, built of red brick, having an ample portal, and in the wall effigies of boy and girl.

This was the parish school. The figures looked more demure than one could believe possible in human boy and human girl. And then I came to the church, a plain and unaffected preaching-house of brick, with pillars and portico of stone. Beside it, on the south side, was a narrow churchyard, adorned with old tomb-stones, head-stones, and altar-stones—the sepulchres of bygone captains, past owners, sailors, and boat-builders. I observed with some pride the name of Burnikel on one of them, the nearest to the street—my ancestor. Perhaps all the important tombs belonged to Burnikels, if I could only climb over the rails to see. The church was shut, yet it might have been more useful in the week, when Wapping is full, than on Sunday, when

Wapping is empty. Had it been open, I could have gratified my family pride still more by observing the tablets and reading of the incomparable virtues of other Burnikels belonging to this fine old stock. There was part of the churchyard on the north side. Its houses had been recently cleared away, and the space turned into a recreation-ground. So liberal is the County Council that they have swept away half the remnant of Wapping that had been spared by the Docks, and now there are not enough people left in the town to populate the recreation-ground. Children were recreating in it, however, and there was a gymnasium for them in one corner, and a stand for the summer band in another corner. A highly picturesque row of 'backs' revealed the character of the streets that had been cleared away.

I noted these things. I observed also that there were still remaining beyond the recreation-ground other streets of small houses — not beautiful, not clean, perhaps squalid, if one were inclined to harshness—and beyond these streets tall masts, which told of another Dock. Wapping, then, did not, as I had fondly imagined, consist of one street only, with a river on one side and docks on the other, and no living person in it at night except the Burnikels. Wapping is a collection of human beings ; it is a hamlet, a township, a town com-

plete. Here was the Parish Church; here were the endowed schools; here was the Vestry Hall; here was the playground. I turned back, and then, which I had passed over before, I perceived before me, fenced round, a peaceful, beautiful burying-ground, lying opposite the Parish Church on the other side of the road. A more peaceful spot one would not expect in the most secluded village. It was filled with tombs and head-stones; it was planted with a thick coppice of limes, lilacs, laburnums, and all kinds of flowering trees and shrubs growing among the tombs. I looked through the bars. Wapping, then, had this one garden left; and since the greater part of Wapping was dead and gone, buried deep below the docks, a churchyard seemed the fittest place in which to possess a garden. Wherever industries spread, and trade increases, we ought to find the past always beside the present. In the midst of the noise and hurry of Manchester there stands the ancient college; in the midst of Hull rises the ancient church; in the midst of the smoke and grime of Newcastle there is its ancient fortress; and beside the modern docks of Wapping stands the old church, with its burying-ground and its schools. Let us never live where there is nothing ancient, nothing to connect us with our forefathers, nothing to remind us of death, nothing to preach to us on the continuous life in which the

living are but links, and the past is neither lost nor forgotten.

The gate was unlocked. I gently pushed it open and stepped within, reverently, yet with the sense of ownership. Why not? Before me stood a head-stone—the name had been recently cleaned and restored—'Sacred to the Memory of John Burnikel, Master Mariner, died March 16, 1808, aged ninety-two years.' That must be the man with the diamonds. I stooped down and pushed aside the grass to read the text with which his pious cousins had decorated the tomb. 'Of whom the world was not worthy,' I read. Astonishing! 'Of whom the world was not worthy.' This must have been written while they still expected to find the diamonds. Then I plunged, so to speak, into the recesses of this coppice. And there I found, to my amazement, sitting on a tomb with folded hands and hanging head, in an attitude of the most profound dejection, the girl Isabel.

She lifted her head when she heard my step. She had been crying; the tears, like dewdrops, lay still upon her cheeks.

'You here, Isabel?' I cried. 'What are you doing in the place of tombs?'

'I am sitting here.' But she rose as if she was tired of sitting there, and should now go home.

'Yes, I see. But——'

'It is a pretty place. There are not too many pretty places in Wapping.'

'No. Do you often come here?'

'In spring and summer sometimes, when I can get away—on Saturday afternoons. It is quiet. Nobody else ever comes. I have it all to myself.'

'Why are you crying, Isabel? Don't cry. It makes me miserable to see a girl crying. Are you unhappy?'

She turned away her head, and made no reply.

'Sit down again where you were, Isabel. It is a pretty place. The lilacs are bursting into blossom, and the laburnums are beginning. It is a very pretty place. The dead sleep well, and the living you do not see. Can you tell me, Isabel, why you are unhappy?'

She shook her head, but she obeyed in sitting down again.

'Of course I have seen all along that you are not happy. You work too hard, for one thing. Is it the work?'

'Oh, no, no, no. I must do what Robert tells me to do.'

'You are too much confined to the house. Is it the want of change?'

'No, no; I want no change. I do what I have to do.'

'You will not tell me?'

'I cannot.'

'Of course, I have no right to ask. Still, I am Robert's cousin, and I see you every day, and you can't wonder if I take an interest in you. Will you be offended if I speak just a little of my mind?'

'I offended? Does that matter?' A strange thing for a girl to say, as if she was of no importance at all—as if surprised that anyone should regard her at all.

'Well, Isabel, in that part of the world where I have chiefly lived the girls are treated with consideration. They are princesses; they are filled with the consciousness of their own power; their words are received with respect, and their wishes are studied. It matters very much indeed whether one offends them or not. So I hope not to offend your ladyship.'

'You will not offend me.'

'Well, then, you work too hard; you get no society; you have no change; you take too little exercise; you are growing nervous and shy; you shrink from seeing people.'

'I live the life that is assigned to me.'

'You are so young, Isabel, that you ought to sing in the house; you ought to walk as if you had wings; you ought to laugh all day; you ought to rebel, and revolt, and mutiny——'

She did laugh, but not with merriment.

'All these things belong to your age, and your sex, and—your beauty.'

'My beauty!' she repeated, with a kind of wonder —'my beauty! Oh no; you must not talk nonsense.'

'Your beauty. You should be a very beautiful girl if the cloud would lift. Come, now; may I lift that cloud for you? May I try, at least?'

I held out my hand. She hesitated a moment. Then she gave me her own timidly.

I did not suspect the real cause of her unhappiness. I did, however, feel a most profound pity for a young girl who could find no better amusement than to sit among the tombs on a fine afternoon in spring. Even those who are nearing the time when they will be put to lie there do not generally like to sit among them.

'You will tell me some other time,' I said, 'why you are so sad. Meantime, let me be your friend; and look here, Isabel: I am a great physician. You must believe that I have cured countless cases of Languishing Lady and Doleful Damsel. I am thousands of years old, although I am apparently only five-and-twenty; that is because I am such a great physician.' Well, at this nonsense she actually smiled. 'And now I will prescribe for you: Not so much work; not so much house; not so much monotony.'

'The work has to be done.'

'Robert is so busy himself that he does not observe. I shall speak to him.'

'Oh, but what he says——'

'Yes, yes, I know. I will speak to him. Now come with me. I will take you out upon the river. That will do you more good than sitting among the tombs—even the tombs of the Burnikels.'

There are still boats and 'first oars' at Wapping Old Stairs. In five minutes I was sitting beside her in the stern of a wherry—Burnikel-built—with a couple of stout fellows pulling us down-stream. And I brought her back with colour in her cheeks and brightness in her eyes. 'My medicine works already,' I said. 'Robert will say that I have done wonders.'

Alas! Robert observed no change at all; and during the half-hour of tea the poor girl sat as usual with hanging head and down-dropped eyes. But it was a beginning.

CHAPTER XI.

AN ADDRESS.

On Saturday evening I called for Frances. We were going to hear the man she would call the Wonderful Person of Wapping.

'We shall have to drive right through London,' I told her. 'You will see first the trade end of the West; then the lane of the country visitors, called the Strand; then the lane of the printers; then the merchants' quarters, silent and deserted; and then the place where the people live who do all the work; the city of the thousand industries. And then you will see these people you are going forth to see.'

'So long as you don't take me to see the places with associations, I don't mind. I was looking over a book about London the other day; it was full of associations. Dear me! What does it matter to me where Milton lived? And why should I want to see the place where Shakspere had a theatre?'

'You are curiously impatient about the past, Frances.'

'I like the world just exactly as it is, George; the order of it and the ways of it; and the flow of the stream—I like to feel that I am in the swim. And if ever I marry again, I shall be a great deal more in the swim.'

'The man you will hear to-night likes the world as it ought to be.'

'Well, why not? So long as we don't change anything. Now, Master Craftsman, my gloves are on.'

'You look very fine to-night, Frances. It will please our friends at Shadwell, seeing a lady among them, that she is a real lady. They resemble your friends in one respect—these men of the gutter, as you kindly called them on a recent occasion—they like to see a woman well dressed.'

It is a long drive from Piccadilly to High Street, Shadwell, which, as everybody knows, is a continuation of Ratcliffe Highway. The whole journey was as unknown to Lady Frances as China or Peru. For the City she cared nothing; memories of Gresham and Whittington moved her not; this evening, of course, the offices and warehouses were closed, and the streets deserted; she only began to take interest when we came out on Tower Hill, and drove past the gray old fortress into the highway sacred to the memory of sailors and to

riverside thieves and to crimps, and to Moll and Poll and Doll. Indeed, ghosts of the departed sinners are still allowed regretfully to hover around the swinging doors of these old taverns, and to linger about the pavement where they were wont to roll and sing and dance and fight. Oh, the brave old days! And they acknowledge that the game is still kept up, and with spirit, though, perhaps, with less heart in it than of old. The fighting has gone off sadly; the singing is still good, but that, too, shows signs of deterioration; the dancing, however, shows the old spirit—legs are loose, heel and toe are true to time; and the drinking is still free and generous. As for Moll and her friends, they continue to lend the charm of woman's society to Mercantile Jack.

'Men and women!' said Lady Frances. 'And by their appearance not among the strictest moralists. Show me men and women, George, and not tall black warehouses, where something once stood, or grimy churches, where something once happened. Give me men and women. Give me the present. Ouf! what a reek from that door!'

The carriage stopped for a moment; a little crowd assembled, seeing that most unaccustomed appearance, a carriage and pair with a coachman and a footman in liveries. The open door belonged to a tavern full of sailors drinking and smoking, so that the air which came

forth in waves was charged with the fragrance of rum, gin, beer and tobacco. The carriage moved on slowly. There came another kind of fragrance. The first knocked one down like a club, the second cut one like a knife.

'It is fried fish,' I explained. 'This is the staple food of the women and work-girls. There are differences in the matter of food. For my own part I should never get over a prejudice against this form of—— Do get on a little faster, if you can,' I called to the coachman.

We passed into another street, really the same, but called by a different name, where there were no sailors and no sailors' friends. It was, however, filled with people walking about; among them were lads smoking cigarettes, girls with immense yellow feathers in their hats and bright blue blouses, walking arm-in-arm, laughing loudly; working men leaning about with pipes, women with children in arms, children everywhere tumbling about the road and the gutter.

'Behold the people!' I said. 'Concentrated people. Pure extract of people.'

'I recognise them,' said Frances, 'though I do not seem to have seen them before. On the whole they look harmless.'

'As for their power of harm, I have my own opinion.

But it is quite certain that at present they don't want to do any harm.'

'It is curious to think that all of us have come out of this mass. Here and there, I suppose, one disengages himself and leaves his friends, and gets up a bit over their heads, and prepares the way for founding a family. That is the way we all began, perhaps. The Earls and Barons of the future have got their fathers and mothers in this crowd. But no one, except you, George, ever wanted to go back again. Oh! most remarkable of men! Unique Man! You wanted to go back again.'

The carriage stopped at the entrance of a hall; gas-lights flamed over the open doors; people, nearly all men, were streaming in, and in the lobby men were standing about disputing and arguing in earnest tones; everyone looked as if he came on private business—which was the first thing remarkable.

I spoke to an attendant doorkeeper, who conducted us upstairs and along the back of the gallery to a private box overlooking the stage. Lady Frances looked round. By the decorations, the footlights, the stage, the place for the orchestra, the gallery which ran all round the room, the large room itself, and the close atmosphere, it was evident that the place was habitually used for entertainments.

'This is the Siren Music-hall,' I explained. 'It is

named, not after the Sisters Three, of whom the proprietor and baptizer never heard, but after the new-fashioned steam-whistle which you may hear all day long upon the river. And it is hired for these meetings.'

'They are not going to have, I hope, a music-hall entertainment?'

'Not quite. You are going to hear a political speech. Meantime, look round and watch the people. You say you want men and women. Very well. There are your men and women all gathered together, especially the men.'

They were nearly all men—working men. Frances looked down upon the crowded hall; the faces she gazed upon shone white and shiny in the glare of the gas; they were serious faces, they were hard faces; the impression produced by the collective face was one of honesty and slow powers of perception, but with determination. Most of them sat in silence, leaning back contentedly, and in no hurry. The men who work actively with the bodily limbs all day for their wage are never in a hurry so long as they can wait sitting. When they talked it was seriously and with earnestness, conducting their argument on the approved lines, in which one man advances an array of alleged facts which he cannot prove, and the other contradicts the

allegations, though he cannot disprove them. This is the argument of the taproom, the bar-parlour, and the smoking-room. The more carefully we adhere to the old-fashioned, well-tried method, the more animated, spirited, and convincing is the conversation. Imperfect knowledge is most clearly indicated by frequent interruptions and noisy denials. Now, these men were arguing on the constitution of the country, being ignorant of what it is, how it has grown, whence it came, or what it means. And they wanted to change it, being ignorant of what these changes would mean, or how they were to be effected, and how other members of the community would receive them. There were Socialists among them, men who look forward to the time when every man, for the sake of every other man, and not for himself at all, will gladly do a hard day's work and get no payment or profit but only the equal ration, the same garb, the same warmth, and the same roof; and they think that the levelling up or down to the same unbroken plane will create, for the first time in history, happiness complete. 'When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?' Alas! it is the same old, old story. There was then no gentleman, but in the third or fourth generation after Adam there was founded the first family of gentlefolk—they were, I believe, Welsh.

There were also in the crowd Anarchists—a kindly race who want to sweep away all laws, with the police and the lawyers, and the judges and the prisons, and to leave everybody to work out his own redemption for himself. And there was among them the common Radical who desires nothing more than the abolition of the Crown, the Church, and the Lords, after which no one certainly can expect or desire anything more. And there were many of that numerous class, the Wobblers, who incline this way and that, being unable to balance the advantages of any one plan against any other. Mostly, however, being poor and dependent, they desire change. Some of the women came with their husbands and brought their work with them, the business of the evening being quite below their own attention. The British matron, who is a practical and keen-eyed person, is seldom able to understand that the abolition of the House of Lords will give her husband better pay, or herself more housekeeping money. Here and there one saw a white woman's face, with set lips and furrowed brow. She was that rare woman who can see the wickedness of things, and the imperfection of things, and the injustice and cruelty and uncertainty of things; and she ceases to believe in the powers that be, or in the doctrines of Church, of teacher, and of preacher, and longs to shuffle the cards and try a new deal, if

haply that may bring a remedy to the evils of the time.

Lady Frances looked down upon this crowd watching and wondering, interested merely by the sight of the lines of faces below her, line behind line, row behind row; while I told her the things that are written down above.

'I am glad I came,' she murmured. 'Oh! I am very glad I came. George, I like to see them. Give me, I said, men and women. I say it again—men and women.'

'And the thoughts of men and women—what they think about the world and themselves and your class, Frances. It is useful knowledge, even if it does not help you to play the game.'

'So long as I am not compelled to associate with them I have no objection to looking at them, or to reading about them. It would be as a branch of natural history, except for the fact that these people may interfere with us. Their thoughts, I suppose, are mostly discontented; and their intentions, if they had any, would be revolutionary. But they are interesting, and I am glad I came.'

By this time the Hall was full to overflowing: the people were crammed in the galleries; they stood on the back-benches; they filled up the gangways; they climbed over the orchestra partition and stood, a mass of young

men, in that capacious pew; they crowded the doors; they were packed tight on the stairs: there was no more room left to put in an umbrella.

'It is seven o'clock,' I said. 'Time's up. The man you are going to hear to-night, Frances—the strong man—the man who has ambitions such as you would like me to have——'

'I never thought you ought to be a local demagogue, George.'

'He is coming out immediately. He knows the people pretty well, and they know him. This evening he will pronounce one of a series of orations he has delivered on the questions of the day. The Captain tells me that he has set the people thinking and talking in a very surprising way. You see how they are discussing things. All these discussions are on the text of his last address.'

'The Wonderful Person of Wapping. I await him with interest.'

Then the orator appeared, stepping out from the wings, and walked quietly to his place beside a small table, which, with a decanter and tumbler, formed the only furniture of the stage. The background, representing a rural scene, with woods, and a lake and a bridge, did not, somehow, seem incongruous with an address bristling with hard facts and practical con-

clusions. A bright country landscape, sunny and beautiful, is really far more appropriate to an address which uplifts the heart than a picture of a mean street, or of men and women toiling over mean and ill-paid labour.

There was no chairman. At the outset one had been proposed, but the lecturer scoffed at the suggestion, said that he could very well introduce himself, and propose for himself a vote of thanks. He therefore stood alone. In his hand he bore a bundle of papers, which he carefully placed in order on the table for reference.

Then he stood upright, facing his audience, and bowed slightly to the round of applause which greeted him.

Lady Frances saw a tall, broad-shouldered, and singularly handsome young man, with a broad square forehead—the light fell full upon it—clear eyes, hair in very short brown curls—such curls as denote strength—a serious face—too serious for his time of life; but, then, it is only your light comedian, your touch-and-go comic man, who can face an audience with a grin, and it is only a ballet-girl who can appear with a smile. There was not, however, the slightest touch of embarrassment or stage fright about him. He stood easily, in an assured attitude, standing well apart from the table, so

that his figure was practically the only thing to be seen upon the stage. He was dressed in faultless evening clothes, with a white flower in his buttonhole. This was the man who, a few weeks before, scoffed at the observance of evening dress, and sneered at the niminy-piminy ways of the fine gentleman.

'Why,' whispered Lady Frances, 'the man is dressed like a gentleman. What does he do that for? He is only talking to workpeople. Look at his face, George; it says as plain as if he were speaking, "I am not afraid —I am a better man than anybody here."'

The orator held up his hand. Everybody settled in his place; everybody adjusted his feet—mostly under the benches; every other person cleared his throat; the women who had come with their husbands looked up at the orator and round the room; then they took up their knitting again, and abstracted their thoughts into some useful line, such as boots and the acquisition of boots. The people on the stairs loudly besought those within to make room for them; one might as well implore the sardines to lie a little closer in their box. So they wailed aloud, like the foolish virgins, because they could not enter. And then the orator began.

I am profoundly sorry that I cannot, in this place, give you even the heads of this discourse; because his words and his facts were forcible and convincing, and I

am sure, dear reader, you would like to be hammered with facts and convinced with reasons. I cannot, however, do so, for the simple reason that the laws of copyright forbid. The orations are now published, and everybody can get them and read them.

He began, however, with a personal point.

'I told you,' he said, 'at the outset, that I am here because I propose to represent this borough at the next General Election. The reason why I have taken the trouble to address you is that you will be my constituents, and it is always best when a man has got opinions of his own that he should instruct his constituents upon them. Mine are not opinions: they are convictions; and my convictions, as I have shown you so far, are simple truths. You are all the better, I am quite sure, for having learned those truths; you will talk much less nonsense, and you will advocate much more sensible measures. So much, of course, you will acknowledge. Now, the next General Election is said to be close upon us. No one can possibly know for certain how close it is, but we may expect it any day. Therefore it is well that I have educated you to support my candidature.

'I also told you at the outset that I mean to enter the House as an Independent Member. I am informed that no Independent Member is of any importance in

the House; that he cannot influence votes that belong to this party or that party; that the House is divided into this flock of sheep and that flock of sheep, which follow their leaders when the bell rings. Very good. My friend, I don't want to influence votes in the House. I want to influence you—you—you—not the House at all. I care nothing about the House. It is through the House that one speaks to the country, nay, to the world, if one is strong enough. I desire to speak the truth about things that I know, the exact plain truth, which they do not hear in the House—the forces which drive us; the way we are driven; the thing that has to be done. I want to speak out to the whole world by speaking in the House. Oh, I am not afraid! Men will laugh at such a confession. It is a worthy and noble ambition, and, my constituents, I mean to prove myself, yes, myself, worthy of that noble ambition. Very well. Now, remember that when I am elected I am not going to call myself your servant, nor shall I have the hypocrisy to pretend that I am sent to the House with a mandate from you. Why, you don't think I am going to accept any instructions from anybody here, do you? You to give me—ME—instructions? My dear people, understand that your collective wisdom is no more than the wisdom of the best man among you, and your best man isn't a tenth part of the man that I am in knowledge, or in

ability either. Do not make any mistake. You may be my servants if you please; it is the best thing in the world for you to learn of me, to question me, to elect me, but I shall never be your servant. You can teach me nothing, but I can teach you a great deal. Understand, then, I shall be an Independent Member in every sense—free of interference of party, free of interference of constituents. So you had better make up your mind at once to turn out one of your present members—I do not in the least care which—and to put me in his place. But, by the Lord, I tell you, I promise you, I will make you proud of your member!'

He stopped. This was only the prologue—the forewords. He drank a little water and took up his papers.

The people, so far from resenting this plainness of speech, clapped and applauded mightily.

'His assurance becomes him,' said Lady Frances. 'A more arrogant speech I never heard. After that, they are bound to elect him.'

And then he turned to his subject. He had at least the gift of oratory, and the first and the most important part of this gift is the power of clear and orderly arrangement; he knew how to select his points, and to present them so that a child might understand; he knew how to repeat them; to present them again in another form,

yet still so as to be intelligible to all; he knew how to present them a third time, so that there should be no chance of forgetting them. He had a flexible, rich, and musical voice, which rolled in thunder in the roof, or dropped to the soft strains of a silver flute. He knew when to stir the people's hearts, and when to make them follow to a cold chain of reason; when to make them laugh, and when to make them cry. The man played with his audience; and if you watched him, as Lady Frances did, you would observe that he rejoiced in his power; there were moments when he used this power wantonly—for his own pleasure when it was not wanted. Now and then, when he trampled upon some pet prejudice and exposed some cherished illusion, there were sounds of disagreement, but faintly expressed and quickly hushed. Thus he spoke of Socialism:

'Do not,' he said, 'be led away by theories of what may be or might be. We are concerned with what is, not with what may be. Man is born alone—absolutely alone in the world; he grows up alone; he learns alone; he works alone; he has his diseases alone; he thinks alone; he lives alone; he dies alone. The only thing that seems to take away his loneliness is his marriage. Then, because he has another person always in the house with him, he feels perhaps that he is not quite so lonely as he thought. It is illusion, but it cheers

him up. Every man is quite alone. Remember that. Everything that he has is his alone; he cannot give it away if he wishes. His face belongs to himself alone—there is no other face like his in the whole world, and there never has been. In the Resurrection of the millions and millions of the long-forgotten dead there will be no face like any other face—no man like any other man. Quite alone. He cannot part with his gifts, his hereditary powers and weaknesses, his learning, his skill of hand and eye; his thoughts, his memory, his history, his doings, his follies—nothing that he has can he impart to any other living creature. It all belongs to him. He is alone in the world.

'Quite alone—he and his property. Remember this, and when you hear men talk of things equal and things equally divided, ask how the most important property of all is to be divided—a man's strength and skill and ability. For you are not equal; there is no equality. Nature—the Order of Creation—screams it loudly to you; she proclaims it from the mountain-tops, she whispers it in the rustling of the leaves, in the flow of the water, and in the breath of the spring. You are not equal. Nothing that was ever made is the equal of any other thing. You are all unequal; you have diversities of gifts; one is a giant and one is a dwarf; one can make and one can only destroy; you are all unequal.

That is the voice of Nature. What follows? We who are individual and unequal have to provide for ourselves. Man is still a creature who hunts and lives by the chase. The rest shapes itself; the strong man tramples down the weak; we associate ourselves together so that the strong man may not too much oppress the weak; wages, hours, work, holidays, prices—all rest upon the will of the strong man, and he is ruled by the will of one stronger than himself. You who are strong, preserve your strength, learn to use it. You will form combinations for your protection against the stronger man. Good: if your strength is greater than his, you will get what you want; if his is greater than yours, you will lose. Above all things, be strong. All the systems, all the experiments, that the world has ever seen, terminate in the victory of the strong man, to whom belongs, and ever will belong, the round world and all that therein is.'

This was only a bit out of the middle of the oration. You will find plenty of pages in the printed book as strong as this passage.

He concluded at last, amid a storm of cheers and shouting.

At the door, as we went out, we met Captain Dering. I introduced him briefly.

'I saw you in the private box,' said the Captain,

taking off his hat to Lady Frances. 'What did I tell you? He winds 'em about like a bit o' string; he does what he likes with 'em. They're afraid of him, and yet they can't help coming to hear him. They'll go away —a whole lot of the chaps are rank Socialist scum'— the old sailor called them 'scum': did one ever know a Socialist sailor?—'they'll go away and curse him. But they'll come again, all the same.'

'And will they vote for him?' asked Lady Frances.

'They will. To a man. Because he isn't afraid to have a mind of his own, and to speak it out, and to let 'em know what he thinks about their collective wisdom. Lord! their wisdom! Look here, now. With permission, Madam.' The Captain was courtesy itself with a lady passenger. 'It's the same all the world over. And if you want to see what all the world wants, go and look for it aboard ship, because a ship is a world by itself. Very good. What do the sailors want? A man who palavers and pretends to take their advice? Not a bit of it. A man who talks about their wisdom? Not a bit of it. They know they've got no wisdom. They can't even pretend to navigate a ship. They want a man to take the command; a skipper who will say, "Go there; do this, —— you!" begging your pardon, Madam. Ask their advice! I'd like to see a sailor's face if his captain asked his advice.'

'You like a strong man everywhere, Captain Dering,' said Lady Frances. 'So do I.'

'It's the same everywhere. They talk about this and that. They ask questions and pretend to know. And the candidate, he just pretends to ask their advice humble-like, and promises to take their advice when he's got it, and goes to the House with his tongue in his cheek. What all the world wants, Madam, is a captain to give the word of command and to navigate the vessel.'

'Then, you do think he will get in? I hope he will. He should have a thousand votes if I had them.'

'If he doesn't, he'll just take and knock their silly heads together.'

'George,' said Lady Frances, as we drove away, 'I have had a most delightful evening. Thank you, ever so much, for bringing me here. Your orator is a very strong man indeed. He speaks like a gentleman, yet he called himself a Master Craftsman—I suppose from some proud humility. "We are all working men," I heard the Archbishop say once. I thought it was rather humbug.'

'This man is indeed a Master Craftsman. He understands honest work with his hands as well as any working man present. In fact, better.'

'He appeared in evening dress. Do Master Craftsmen habitually wear evening dress?'

'The garb proclaimed the difference between his

audience and himself. He does not appear before them as a workman, but as their master in every sense. The evening clothes are an allegory, you see. He told them pretty plainly that he is their master.'

'He did indeed.'

'Seeking election, not in order to carry out any views of theirs, you see, but to advance his own views. I think he was quite right to put on the dress-coat.'

'He certainly speaks like a man who knows things.'

'The things that man knows, Frances, would sink a three-decker. And the things he does not know couldn't float a canoe.'

'Your metaphors are mixed, George; but you mean well.'

'You perceived, of course, that he is not a scholar. These self-taught men never are. He lacks the literary phrase, except, perhaps, when he comes to personal appeal. But the literary phrase may come. He acquires everything with amazing ease the moment he learns that it is necessary.'

'Necessary? For what?'

'For his personal ambition. Frances, you have seen to-night the chrysalis. Very soon, I believe, you will see the—the other creature—which comes out of the chrysalis. This man—you have heard what he says—means to become a power in the House—that is the

ambition which most pleases you. He will, he calmly prophesies, be invited in a few years to become a Cabinet Minister; after that, Prime Minister; then—perhaps—Protector of the Realm. He is as determined as Cromwell; as clear-headed and as able—as ruthless, perhaps; and perhaps, also, as selfish.'

'If he can debate as well as he can speak he ought to get on. A man like that always begins as a Radical. He wants to pull down the Church and the Lords, of course.'

'On the contrary, he would pull down neither Church nor Lords. He would, I believe, enlarge the borders of both. You heard him say that he was going to be an Independent Member?'

'Then, George, speaking as the daughter of a Prime Minister, I say that he will dig his own grave. Tell him that he must belong to a Party, if he would get on. He must—tell him he must! If he does not, he would do far better to remain outside.'

'I have told him so over and over again. But he is as obstinate as a Western mule.'

'And he is—your cousin! I had forgotten that. Why, it accounts for the strange resemblance. I was haunted all the time by his likeness. I could not think what likeness. It is you, George; he is strangely like you. Only bigger, I think.'

'Yes; bigger all over, and more ambitious, Frances.'

'Oh! and he is teaching you his trade. And what have you taught him, George?'

'Nothing worth speaking of. You see, a man brought up at Wapping, which is only a little isolated slip of ground between dock and river—a kind of island—has very few chances of acquiring the air of society.'

'George, you have taught your cousin manners—I know you have. And you are going to introduce him about. Do you think that he will not betray himself?'

'I hope he will, because there will be no pretence. But in all essentials he will be fit for presentation in your own drawing-room, Frances, where I hope to bring him with your permission.'

'Bring him, by all means. It is always a happiness to meet a strong and clever man. I think your cousin, to look at him and to listen to him, must be as clever as he is strong. George, give him, if you can, a lighter style. It is all very well to be intensely earnest at certain points—especially the weakest in an address—but he must not be intensely earnest all through. Make him cultivate repartee and epigram. Teach him to laugh a little, and to smile a little. A man nowadays, even a man who is going to pull down the House of Commons by the two pillars, should laugh and smile a little beforehand. But he is a strong man, George, and a very interesting man.'

CHAPTER XII.

THE PHYSICIAN.

When we assembled for early dinner on Monday I looked to see some effect of our little afternoon voyage and talk on Isabel. Alas! the cloud hung again over her head—a visible, dark cloud. She sat timidly glancing at her lover, who was also her liege and lord; more timidly, perhaps, because Robert had now begun to put off his silent habit and to talk at dinner—one result of his West End experience. This astonished and rather terrified her, because words from Robert were generally words of admonition; and more uneasily, perhaps, because he was talking about persons of whom she understood nothing. I say persons: so great was the change already that Robert talked of persons as well as principles; and he, who was formerly as chary of his laughter as Saturn or as a Scottish divine, had now begun to laugh readily and cheerfully.

For my own part, the talk of Saturday afternoon and the revelation of the girl's unhappiness so mightily impressed me—one can never bear to see a girl in sorrow—that I had been thinking ever since how Isabel's life might be bettered for her. I could only think of two ways: first, to lighten her work; secondly, to introduce a little change. As for the former, she was housekeeper, and kept the household accounts, which was enough for one girl to attempt; also, she was accountant to 'Burnikel and Burnikel,' and kept the books of the house and paid the men. Keeping the books meant a laborious and old-fashioned system of double book-keeping, which took a great deal of her time. This alone was enough for one girl to attempt. She was, further, private secretary; she hunted up passages, copied passages, made notes, and wrote all Robert's letters. This alone was quite enough for one girl to attempt; and, lastly, she had to look after her own dress, and I am sure that this is, by itself, quite enough to occupy all the time of a conscientious girl. As regards getting some change of scene, the only way was to bring the change to her, and that, I saw clearly, must be my task.

It is a delicate thing to interfere between a man and his mistress, even when the mistress is not the object of any fondling and nonsense—even when she is also

accountant, secretary, and housekeeper. I therefore approached the subject diplomatically.

'Boat-building,' I said, working round to it by an unexpected path, 'is a business of selling as well as of making, isn't it?'

'Go on,' he replied cheerfully; 'what are you driving at?'

'This, first: I am getting on very well with the craft, but I don't know much about the trade.'

'You know very little about the trade, and I fear you never will; because, George, though you may make me a gentleman—to look at—no one will ever make you a tradesman.'

'Why not?'

'Because you've been brought up different. You haven't our feeling for money. Every coin with us means money saved, or money won. A sovereign means victory in a pitched battle. With you it comes out of an inexhaustible bag. See now. If you want to go anywhere, you take a cab. It comes natural to you. Lord! I laugh when I see you calling a cab. We take a penny 'bus. If we must take a cab, we give him a shilling, reckoning up the fare and measuring the distance; we grudge that shilling. You toss him half a crown, and think nothing of it. You tip waiters and porters with sixpences and shillings; we never tip any-

body at all if we can help it. When you want to have anything, you order it without asking the price; we cast about to get it cheap, or we do without it. When you do ask the price you pay at once whatever they tell you, or you have it put down. We know better; we know that a price means what they can get, not what they please to ask: we beat them down. Then you go to the dearest people to buy things. We know that the dear people are no better than the cheap, because the same workmen make for both. We study the pence; you throw away the pounds.'

'My dear cousin, the period approaches when I shall have nothing but pence to study. However, what I wanted to say was this: The time seems to have come when I ought to learn something of the trade side.'

'Well, I will tell you what you please.'

'There are the prices of materials, the cost of labour, rent, taxes, selling prices—all these things. The best way for me to learn is not to worry you, but to read and examine your books. Everything is there, of course.'

Robert did not reply for a few moments. It is the instinct of a man of business to wish his affairs to loom large in the imagination of humanity. His books alone conceal the real truth.

'If it was any other man,' he said, 'or for any other

purpose—but as it's you, take the books and examine them. They are in the safe over the way. Isabel has the key.'

'Thank you. With her help I will not only look at them, but, for a term, keep them for you.'

'You can't keep them. You don't know book-keeping by double entry.'

'Isabel shall teach me, and your books cannot be very complicated.'

'Very well. Have it your own way.'

So that was done. I could thus take a great load off the girl's frail shoulders. Then I went on to the other points.

'Isabel,' I said, 'is not looking well.'

'She looks exactly the same to-day as she did six months ago.'

'No; she is not looking at all well. She is not naturally, I should say, a strong girl. If I were you, Robert, I would speak to someone about her.'

'Why?' he answered impatiently. 'She hasn't told me she was ill. What is the matter with her?'

'Too much confinement; too little change.'

'I've noticed nothing wrong.'

'No, you see her every day; you would hardly notice a gradual change. Can't you see, however, that she is pale and nervous?'

'She is always pale and nervous. Is she more pale and nervous than usual?'

'There is a furrow in her forehead; there are black lines under her eyes; and her cheek is thin.'

'This,' said the fond but injured lover, 'comes of having women about one. Why can't she tell me if she is not well?'

'You must have noticed how silent she is—and how she droops her head.'

'She is always silent. She knows that I don't like chatter. As for drooping her head, I suppose she carries her head as she likes.'

'No doubt. At the same time, Robert, she is in a bad way. I am certain of it.'

'Well'—he hesitated—'what am I to do? Look here, George, you know more than I do about women. It's no use talking to the Captain, and there's only the cook besides: what am I to do?'

'I should say, give her, first, more fresh air, less work, more amusement, change of scene.'

'Good Lord, man! how am I to give her change of scene? You don't mean that I am to give up my work just now, when the Election may be sprung upon us at any moment, in order to go dawdling and dangling about with a woman?'

'Well, I'll help a bit, if you agree.'

'Agree? I should think I would agree! Go on.'

'I have taken over the books of the Firm. That will be a great relief to her. As for you, don't give her, just now, things to copy; write your own letters. Then she will have nothing left but the housekeeping, which is a simple matter.'

'Well, and what about the change of scene?'

'I was thinking—if you don't mind—that I could take her out occasionally—on Saturdays or Sundays—and perhaps in the long evenings.'

'If you would, and if it would do her any good. I don't want to be hard on the girl, George. You know how busy I am, and what a lot I have to think about. She's a good and obedient girl on the whole. I can't, you see, be worrying myself continually about the day by day looks of my clerks and people.'

'Isabel is hardly a "clerk and people," is she?'

'Of course not. But you know what I mean.'

'I believe I know what you mean. Your thoughts are always concerned with things that seem to you of far more importance than a woman's health.'

'That is so,' he replied, impervious to the shaft of satire.

'Well, Robert, I will do what I can. While we are talking about Isabel, there is another thing on my

mind. We may assume, I suppose, that you are going to succeed.'

'You may certainly assume so much. Why, else, do I take all this trouble?'

'Well, when you are a great man—a man of society—it will be a matter of some importance that your wife should hold her own in society.'

Robert coloured. 'Why shouldn't Isabel hold her own? A woman has got nothing to do but to sit down and take what comes.'

'There are many ways of sitting down.'

'You mean, I suppose, that her case is—like my own. Do you want to send Isabel into Piccadilly to learn manners?'

'Her case is not so bad as yours,' I told him plainly. 'But it is a case of the same kind.'

'I always thought she was a quiet, modest kind of girl, else I could never have promised to marry her; but I dare say you are right. After my own experiences—I am a good bit wiser than I was—I suppose that there are ways and customs that a woman should know—that can't be learned in this corner of the world.'

'She wants manner — that is the only thing she wants, except happiness, perhaps. I cannot impart manner to her, but I can show her women who have it.

Remember, Robert, it may be of the utmost importance to you, at some future time, that your wife should show by her manner that she is accustomed to society.'

I knew, of course, while I spoke, that such a thing is absolutely impossible. A girl brought up as Isabel had been could never acquire the real air and manner which belongs to the gentlewoman born and bred. All kinds of virtues, graces, charms, attractions, allurements, arts, and accomplishments, may be acquired by a woman, but this one quality she inherits or develops from infancy. Not that it is a charm above all others, as some women fondly believe. By no means. For my own part, I have learned that a woman may lack this charm as she may lack other things, and yet be above and beyond all other women in the world in the eyes of her lover.

'I suppose,' said Robert, 'that you are right.'

'Very good. Then I will sometimes take her where she will see well-dressed women. You shall see, after a bit, how her pale cheeks will put on roses, and her listless manner will become cheerful. Oh! and there is something else. She must practise her music more—she is starved for want of music. She must practise in the day-time. Perhaps she might sing a little. It won't disturb you.'

'All right,' he said. 'Oh! it's all right. Have it

your own way. Perhaps you'd like the workmen over the way to sing a chorus while she strums the piano? Perhaps you'd like to do a breakdown in the road? Only make her get well, George, without troubling me. And don't look as if it's my fault that she's a bit pale.'

That day, after dinner, Robert went his way as usual. The Captain went another way. Isabel, the cloth being removed, spread out her books upon the table and sat down with a little sigh.

I sat down on the other side, leaning my elbows on the table.

'Isabel,' I said, 'you've got to be obedient to your Physician.'

'I must go on with my master's work, please, Physician. When that is done I will be obedient.'

I took the books from her, shut them up, and put my hand upon them. 'There!' I said; 'now you are not going to trouble yourself about these books any more. Thus saith the Healer.'

'What do you mean?'

'I have spoken to the Commander-in-Chief. He graciously consents that I shall take over these books for the future. All you have to do is to show me how you book-keep by double entry. He further consents to write his own letters with his own hand—letters about

his borough and all. He will give no more extracts, arguments, and illustrations to copy out for his speeches. You are released. He thinks further that, if you housekeep with diligence, and look after your dress with zeal, and make yourself look pretty and desirable, you will have quite enough to do.'

She blushed a rosy red. 'Robert didn't say that! Oh, impossible!'

'He didn't exactly say so, in so many words'—in fact, it was impossible—'but I have no doubt that he really meant it.'

'It was you who said it, and meant it, too,' she murmured.

'The Commander-in-Chief further expresses his desire that you should practise your playing all day long, if you like, and your singing too, if you can sing. Nothing is better for the chest than singing.'

'I have never learned. I only sing in church.'

'I will get you some songs and some new music. Plenty of music, that is my first prescription; plenty of singing, that is the second prescription; laughing, if you can find anything to laugh at. You can laugh at me if you like; I wish you would. You don't know the good it would do you. Dancing, if there is anyone to dance with; you can dance with me if you like; I wish you would. Flowers for the windows, and to brighten

up this old house. Change of air and of scene. You shall go with me somewhere next Saturday.'

She stared in amazement. 'What does all this mean?' she asked.

'It means, Isabel, that Robert is seriously concerned about your looks, and it means that we have considered together what to do with you, and that these are the measures we have adopted.'

'Robert seriously concerned about me? Robert anxious about my looks?'

She covered her face with her hands to hide the tears that arose. 'It would matter nothing to Robert if I were dying. He would notice nothing, and he would care nothing. I belong to him, that is all; so does his chair. Oh, it is you—you who have done this. It is all your kindness—yours—and I am almost a stranger to you. And Robert, who is to be my husband, has never all the time said one word of kindness—not one word of kindness. And as to——' She stopped, with sobbing.

'Nay, Isabel; take all this as an act of kindness. It is not his way to say words of affection.'

She shook her head. 'Not one word of kindness. Robert cares nothing for me—nothing.'

'And you?'

'Oh, I tremble day and night to think that I must

marry him. George, you asked me for my secret; that is my secret. If I could go away anywhere—to be housemaid even—I would go. But I cannot—I cannot; and he will never give me up unless—— Oh, I pray night and morning that he may find another woman and fall in love with her. But he will not—oh, he cannot; he does not know what love means; his heart is as hard as a stone, and he thinks of nothing but himself.'

'I will keep your secret, Isabel,' I replied gravely. 'Let us never speak of it again; and perhaps, when he gets on in the world, he will soften.'

She shook her head again.

'Play me something, my child, and soothe your own soul while you play.'

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE FIELDS.

I GAVE her new music, some books of songs, some books of poetry, and some novels of a kind that I thought she would like. I filled the windows with flowers, insomuch that Robert groaned; I gave her flowers for the table. In the evening I took her on the river for an hour of the fresh strong air which sweeps up with the flow and down with the ebb; and on Saturday I took her for a little journey into the country.

I wanted real country, not cockney country, though that is not to be despised. Isabel was clad, I well remember, in a summer dress of some soft and light material. Perhaps it was not trimmed exactly as a Bond Street dressmaker would approve. She wore a hat which had been bought in the neighbourhood of Aldgate, yet it was a pretty hat; and with a touch of colour round her neck, and a flower at her throat, she looked a very dainty damsel indeed. And, oh, the

blindness, and the coldness, and the stony-heartedness of her *fiancé*, who would have no kissing, and fondling, and foolishness. In this respect, though we were sprung from the same stock, I am not ashamed to confess that in my principles, not to speak of practice, we were hopelessly at variance.

'Permit me to observe, Isabel,' I remarked judicially, 'that you look very nice, and that your dress becomes you.'

'Oh!' She coloured with pleasure; she was so unused to compliments, you see. 'I am so glad you like it. If you had not made Robert give up all that work I should not have found time to make it.'

'Well, I thought of taking you by rather a long journey, if you don't mind that—to Rickmansworth. Then you shall walk through a lovely park that I know of, and then we shall be picked up by a trap and drive to Chenies, there to dine, and go home in the cool of the evening. Will that suit you, Isabel?'

'Anything suits me that suits you, George; only I am afraid——'

'What are you afraid of?'

'I am afraid of you. Oh, not that way'—she did not explain what way—'only you belong to another world almost. I am afraid that I shall be such a stupid companion. I don't even talk your language; and you

always look so happy. I am ashamed to be seen with anyone who looks so happy.'

I laughed. Afraid of me! As if any woman in the world could ever be afraid of me! 'Why,' I told her, 'I go in perpetual awe and adoration of all women. I look happy because you condescend to walk with me. Women are all goddesses. I worship in fear——' So she smiled, and resigned herself to fate, and we set off.

From Wapping to Rickmansworth is a long journey: it takes an hour and a half. In the underground Isabel began to talk again about Robert.

'I am ashamed,' she said, 'of having told you what I did last Monday; I am ashamed of feeling so—afraid of Robert. You will think me the most unworthy person in the world when I tell you that it is gratitude—the deepest gratitude—that ought to bind us to Robert. Did he ever tell you how we came to his house? No? Well, I will tell you, and then you will understand what I mean. It is five years since we came to him. I was sixteen then. We are his cousins. He could not get on with his mother. She was a very grand lady—I remember her—who dressed in black silk, and wore a large gold chain, and wanted to rule everybody. And Robert was the master, and he intended to be master, in which he was quite right. So they couldn't agree, and his mother went out to her other sons in Tasmania.

Then Robert remembered us. Just then it was, oh, terrible time with us. I used to lie awake crying and praying for help. And Robert brought the help.'

'What was the trouble?'

'Father had a stroke—you see how lame he is—and he couldn't go to sea any more, and there was no money at all.'

'Oh, but that was terrible.'

'Yes. They were trying to get father into the Trinity Almshouse, and I was to go and do something —become a barmaid, perhaps. Then Robert found us out. "Come and live with me," he said. And so we came. I was to be his secretary, and to keep the books and the house.'

'And that you have continued ever since. Yes. And you have never been outside Wapping once all that time?'

'Oh yes; now and then I go as far as Aldgate.'

'Have you been into any kind of society? Have you had any kind of change?'

'No; we have no visitors here, and I have been too busy to think of change.'

'That is just it; you have been too busy. Don't talk to me of gratitude, Isabel. Robert has taken from you more than he has given. Not that he is to be blamed. Robert, you see, is such a strong sort that

he never wants any change, and he thinks that nobody else does. Why, you've lost what ought to have been your happiest days. Why, you ought to have been a princess.'

'Please, George——' She stopped me, turning red. 'Remember that, whatever I have lost, I have never heard foolish compliments.'

'If you call that foolish—— But I refrain. So, little one, you entered upon the boat-building business; and you saw Robert, naturally, every day.'

'Yes; all day long.'

'And he — he — I mean you — presently accepted him.'

She blushed again. 'Yes; he said he must have a wife some time or other, and he would marry me. But he had a great deal to do first, and I must not expect him to—to——'

'I know. The most singular limitation of an engagement on record.'

'If I could make him happy, how could I refuse? Besides, I was afraid to refuse. And we owed everything to him. But it won't have to be for a great while yet—not for years.'

The train arrived at the station. I ordered a conveyance to meet us at Chorley Common, and I took Isabel by a way that I knew through the Park.

There is nothing in the world, I believe, lovelier than an English park in early summer. Wild places—lofty mountains, tall peaks, dark ravines, broad glaciers, black forests, cliffs white, cliffs red, cliffs black—touch another note. The tranquillity, the quiet beauty of the Park, fills the soul with rest and calm. The Alps do not call forth the same kind of emotion as a stately park.

I do not know how long it was since Isabel had been in the country. She looked about her with a kind of stupor. There were tall trees, not in lines, but single; all with their lower branches at the same height above the sward—the height, that is, to which the deer can reach; the foliage was at its best; the turf was green and soft and elastic; a skylark was singing up above; a blackbird was repeating his pretty, tuneful lay close beside us; there was a confused chatter from the bridge; the buttercups covered the low-lying part; beyond us ran the river, the little river Chess, winding among the meadows. The air that fanned the soft cheeks of the girl breathed refreshment. We were quite alone save for the birds and the trees, and afar off a herd of deer.

'What do you think of it, Isabel?'

She made answer with the simple interjection which is used for everything beyond the power of speech. There is no other word in any language half so useful or half so expressive, because, you see, it expresses every

possible form of emotion—love, pain, pleasure, hope, fear, admiration, joy, despair.

'Come,' I said; 'we must not stay too long.'

'Oh! But not to hurry. It is wonderful; to think that these lovely places are all around us and we never see them! George, to live all the time in that corner and never to see these things! Oh, is it life?'

'No, Isabel, it is not life: it is prison. But courage, we have broken prison. The doors are open. We shall see lots of things rare and beautiful now. This is only a beginning.'

So we walked on more slowly, because this part of the Park is not very big. In order to show off my country lore, I carried on a little running commentary. 'That whistle is the blackbird's; that is the thrush; did you hear the cuckoo? You must run for luck. That is the blackcap; that is the complaint of the willow warbler.'

'You know them all,' she said jealously, 'and I know not a single one. Oh, how ignorant I am of everything—everything!'

'I will teach you. I am sure you will be an apt scholar. You shall learn the flowers, too—the names of all the flowers; I have got some good by being born in the country. I can teach you the birds, and their song and their flight; and the flowers, and their seasons

and their history; and the trees and the leaves. We had a country house once; there was another one near us, with a huge park, where I used to wander with Frances.'

'Who was Frances?'

'Lady Frances was the daughter of the Earl of Clovelly, formerly Prime Minister. Her mother was a great political lady who had a *salon*.'

'What is a *salon?*'

'She received in her house the men of the party; encouraged the deserving, rebuked the lazy, and strengthened those who wobbled. You still do not understand? I will explain further, not now. Briefly this, Frances and I were great friends always, and we learned those things when we were children together.'

'Are you engaged to Lady Frances?' she asked sharply.

'Oh dear no! There is no question of engagement between us. We are like brother and sister. Frances is a young widow; if she were to marry again, it would be to a strong man, full of ambition, who would advance himself and enable her to become what her mother was.'

'She should marry Robert, if she wants a strong man.'

'Indeed, she might do worse. Now, Isabel, this is the wildest place anywhere round London; you are quite in the country; there are no houses to be seen, no roads, no railways, nothing but trees, and grass, and

sky, and flowing river. Sit down on this trunk and rest, and don't try to tell me how much you like it.'

We sat down on a fallen tree: the sunshine lay on the rippling waters where the light breeze here and there lifted the surface into a little crest of wave, or where it was broken by the leaping of a fish; there were wild ducks overhead flying in two straight lines that joined at a single duck, to make an angle of thirty degrees—not that Isabel asked what angle they made—and higher up was flying a pair of herons, their long legs stretched out behind them.

No one, I say, was in the Park; nor was there any sign or sound of any human creature: the leaves of spring were at their earliest and their loveliest; the chestnuts were in bloom; and the girl sat with hands folded in her lap, carried away by the spectacle of the abounding joy of spring. Perhaps for the first time in all her cribbed and cabined youth, she felt the full joy of life. It fell upon her in waves; it made her faint; it filled her with a new emotion. Shall we ever become too old to remember the joy of life in adolescence—the yearning after we know not what—the happiness of the sunshine, the air, the water, the green trees, the birds—the fulness and the sweetness and the innocence of it—the consciousness of understanding for the first time what life means—how happy it may be—if the gods

permit—how glorious and how abundant are Nature's gifts to bless the living? We cannot thus clothe the thoughts of the young with words; youth is hardly conscious of them. I am sure that Isabel could not describe the emotions that filled her soul. Words are only possible long after the thing itself is over and done with, and possible no longer. We who are old can never again feel that overwhelming, supreme, passionate joy of life; but we can remember—sometimes. When did it first fall upon you, dear reader? Like the Wesleyans, let us exchange experiences. Were you alone? Was there a companion to share your passions? Was it on some bright day in early summer among woods and streams and the song of birds that this sense of an all-abundant nature and a life capable of feeling all, embracing all, receiving all, fell upon you, and carried you for a brief space—a space all too brief—beyond yourself?

'I have never seen this place before,' she murmured, as if the place alone was the cause of this strange and unknown feeling, and as if she could not choose but say something.

'We will come here again,' I said.

For her face was flushed, and her eyes were brighter than was their wont, her hands were tightly clutched, and her lips were parted. She was in a highly-nervous

condition when we started. Now she looked like one trying to repress some over-mastering emotion.

'I have never dreamed; I have never thought,' she continued.

'You have lived too long in a dull house, Isabel.'

The words came from afar off; she heard nothing.

She sprang to her feet. 'Oh!' she cried, 'I must run; I cannot sit still.' She threw out her arms, she was carried away; she was drunk with the new-born joy of life. 'I must sing.' She lifted up her voice, her clear, full voice, and sang; and—wonderful to relate!—she sang the words of a hymn:

> 'Oh, God of Hosts, the mighty Lord,
> How lovely is the place
> Where Thou, enthroned in glory, show'st
> The brightness of Thy face!'

'Isabel!' I cried, 'you are transformed!'

She was: not the finest actress in the whole world could so change herself in a moment of time; not the greatest Queen of Tragedy could so stand with outstretched arms, with flaming cheek and parted lips—as if to welcome and to drink in all—all—all that Nature had wherewith to bless the living. In that moment I discovered the ideal Isabel, the possible Isabel, the dream of the sculptor—a lovely dream, a divine ideal! For a moment I thought of the old worships—the

worship of Nature; the worship of the Sun; the procession of the seasons—the pageant of the year; the votaress who was seized with the celestial rapture and sang words unintelligible and danced unearthly steps, and fell at the feet of the god; what was that old ecstasy but this strange extravagance, suddenly awakened in a girl rendered hysterical by long dulness and stupid work, and confinement and the repression of all that is natural in youth?

It lasted a moment only. Then her arms dropped and the colour went out of her cheek, and I caught her as she fell, and laid her gently on the grass. I ran down to the river and brought back a hat full of water, and touched her forehead with a few drops. She quickly recovered and sat up.

'Where am I? What has happened?' she cried. 'Oh! what has happened?'

'Nothing serious, Isabel. Keep quite quiet. The heat, or the sun, or the strangeness, was too much for you. Perhaps you had better lie back for a little.'

'No—no——' She got up. 'I must have fainted. Why did I faint? Oh, I am so ashamed of myself! I cannot understand why I fainted.'

'Well, Isabel, when an ancient Greek met the great god Pan in the forest, he instantly fell dead. So that you ought not to be surprised that you merely fainted

when you first saw great Pan's dominion. Will you rest a little longer?'

'No; I am quite recovered. Let us go on, for fear I should faint again.'

So we walked on, through the rest of the Park and came out close to the common called Chorley. Here the carriage was waiting for us, and we drove the rest of the way.

Isabel was very silent. She lay back in the carriage, looking into the woods as we drove along the road. She was in a mood when the soul needs silence. Had I known that she would be so deeply moved, I think I should have hesitated to bring her to such a place. The mind of a maiden is too delicate an instrument for the rough hand of man. He cannot touch the strings, without fear of something snapping. But her cheek was touched with colour and her eyes with light.

We arrived at Chenies. There is a church here with tombs of the Russells. Isabel took no interest in them. There is an old manor-house, the most beautiful manor-house in England—a gem of a house, built of red brick, with creepers all over it, and a stately garden; a house to dream of. But Isabel cared nothing at all about the house, and showed no interest or curiosity in the noble House of Russell. There were the ruins of a small Religious House at the back. Isabel took no interest

in the monks or nuns who once lived in this House, nor in the ruins, nor in the little reconstructions of the House which I attempted. But beside the ruins at the back there is a wood, and here we walked in the shade, looking out between the trees at the breadths of sunshine beyond, and up into the branches above at the gleaming sunlight, and between the leaves. She wanted nothing more than just the peace of the wood and the glory of the sunshine.

I tore her away at last. For the hour was seven, and there were lamb cutlets at the little Inn. And it was time for Masterful Man to assert himself.

It is a long way back, as it is a long way to come, and all the way back Isabel sat as one in a dream. I could not wake her out of the dream.

I left her at last at her own door.

'We are home again,' she said. 'Thank you, oh! so much. It has come with me all the way home. I hope it will stay with me. Good-night, George.'

What had come with her? I believe she meant the new-born feeling of the beauty and the joy of the world.

END OF VOL. I.

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